

# ARMOUR FOR APHRODITE

T. STURGE MOORE







# ARMOUR FOR APHRODITE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

1899. THE VINEDRESSER AND OTHER  
POEMS  
1901. APHRODITE AGAINST ARTEMIS  
1903. ABSALOM  
1903. DANAË  
1905. THE LITTLE SCHOOL  
1906. POEMS  
1911. MARIAMNE  
1911. A SICILIAN IDYLL  
1914. THE SEA IS KIND  
1917. THE LITTLE SCHOOL (ENLARGED)  
1920. DANAË  
1920. TRAGIC MOTHERS  
1923. JUDAS  
1925. RODERIGO OF BIVAR

PROSE

1899. THE CENTAUR AND THE BAC-  
CHANTE, FROM THE FRENCH  
BY MAURICE DE GUERIN  
1920. THE POWERS OF THE AIR

CRITICISM

1903. ALTDORFER  
1904. DURER  
1906. CORREGGIO  
1910. ART AND LIFE (FLAUBERT AND  
BLAKE)  
1915. HARK TO THESE THREE  
1919. SOME SOLDIER POETS





# ARMOUR FOR APHRODITE

BY  
T. STURGE MOORE

GRANT RICHARDS AND  
HUMPHREY TOULMIN  
AT THE CAYME PRESS  
LTD  
XXI SOHO SQUARE  
LONDON MCMXXIX

*Printed and made in Great Britain*  
*at the BURLEIGH PRESS,*  
*Lewin's Mead, BRISTOL.*



## DEDICATION

*This book is gratefully inscribed to those who attended the author's class in æsthetics at Bedales School 1924-5 as it is largely the outcome of their inspiring attention and interest.*

## THE ARGUMENT

*This book suggests that it has become necessary to arm the naked goddess, who figures the divineness of liking, in order that she may re-invade our minds made hostile to her by the overweening exclusiveness of intellect. In other words, Taste has become increasingly perplexed by fashion and entangled in theory, till liking finds no free way in us.*

*The inauguration of an æsthetic life is advocated, which, though it never attain the ideal, will, in proportion to the devotion with which it is pursued, become ever richer and more self-consistent: since loyalty to liking proves to be the test and transformer of the statement, 'This is the most beautiful,' into 'No, I was mistaken, this other is still more so,' and, followed up, proceeds to freely recanvass the result till the process is repeated. By this application of the experimental method, not as in science to observed facts and the discovery of reality, but to respected preferences and the discovery of the congenial, beauty may for ever be approached, even as science is for ever arriving nearer and yet nearer to truth.*





## CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	I

*False analogies with science have misled while ambition has seduced æsthetes into narrowing and isolating their experiences, till they starve on mere distinction. This book endeavours to re-interpret long-neglected thoughts so as to help those who hitherto have had no touch for poetry and art to encounter the right experiences; those who have had only faint or distant acquaintance with them to wax in contemplative power; and those who are losing this, to recover their hold.*

CHAPTER I. The Meaning of Beauty	3
----------------------------------	---

(1) *Beauty names the value to each of us of things we like to gaze at and listen to. Three words, which name not expedients but goals, and give action both direction and significance.*

(2) *Its most general attribution is to admired sensuous objects. Such sensuous wholes are arrangements of appearances which every constituent enhances and which, if nothing lacks, are perforce admired when perceived; the value is therefore intrinsic. In order not to misunderstand those who see it we must distinguish precisely to what organic wholes they ascribe beauty. Response to this value is only limited by the efficiency of the organism sensitive to it, and these are indefinitely capable of growth.*

CONTENTS		Page
(3)	<i>Spiritual beauty and intellectual beauty metaphorically liken abstract to sensuous structures ; from this fact arises the ancient confusion of beauty with truth.</i>	20
(4)	<i>Admiration distinguishes beautiful from other organic wholes. Geometry must fail to provide a criterion for beauty ; so must psychology, since both envisage truth. Indeed, no kind of information results in beauty which merely designates that of which the appearance contents our eyes or ears.</i>	25
(5)	<i>The conclusions so far arrived at exclude the possibility of Realism, Impressionism, Expressionism, the Arts and Crafts hedonistic Utilitarianism, or the virtuoso's technical proficiency, being able to account for art-value. The divine simplicity is far more complex than those who accept such origins for it ever dream.</i>	29
PIVOTS - - - - -		38
CHAPTER II. <i>Æsthetic Experience</i> -		41
(1)	<i>The æsthetic experience englobes the admired appearance and has an immense range of possible organization. We share it with birds and possibly with insects. Cases in which the admired appearance is not that of a work of art or even of a material object considered. As language is inadequate to describe or fully analyse</i>	



# CONTENTS

Page

*life so it fails to more than suggest æsthetic experience.*

- (2) *Our personal defects limit our appreciations. The absurdity of recent attempts to find a criterion for beauty in the health or morbidity of the nerves: these books are nevertheless helpful in so far as they make us aware how completely psyche and body are complementary. The function and inadequacy of descriptions of and dissertations about works of art.* 47
- (3) *Music and literature compared and contrasted with graphic art. The situation of the plastic arts intermediary. Intensity of emotion no criterion. Resumé of the conclusions reached.* 50

PIVOTS - - - - - 57

## CHAPTER III. Creator and Creation - 59

- (1) *The popular misconception of the nature of genius. Everything is drawn from without save the energy to discover, prefer and combine.*
- (2) *Spirit defined as the power by which one agent influences another without direct action or purpose. The work of art both a creation and an obedience. All art derivative.* 60
- (3) *The actual process of creation contrasted with conceptions of it journalistically current.* 65
- (4) *The unfathomable docility of the great artist.* 68

## CONTENTS

Page

- (5) *The immense variety of elements renders patience and resiliency as necessary to the artist as docility.*
- (6) *The artist's preparation not visionary but vital.* 70
- (7) *Two fallacies rejected—the first, that an artist expresses himself; the second, that he expresses his themes. Genuineness not excellence. The vanity of experts.* 74
- (8) *We admire æsthetically works, not their producers. Hero-worship in the realm of art is human and weak and degenerates till tittle-tattle is mistaken for criticism and appreciation. However, there is an artistic personality, distinct from that of the artist, revealed in successful works. The superior adequacy of the ideas put forward in this chapter to those current.* 77

PIVOTS - - - - - 80

## CHAPTER IV. Criticism and Creation 83

*Freedom of thought presupposes freedom of action, so art presupposes experimental familiarity with the material to be employed, and cannot be divorced from a constant intimacy with it. If art is docile what laws does it obey? The idea that no laws govern it is then rejected and Croce's formulæ are exposed. Criticism is distinguished from creation, and the origin of impressionism traced to the confusion of art with science. The immensity of ignor-*



CONTENTS

Page

ance and the practical inconveniences of supposing it less than it really is are next pointed out, and the creative impulse is admitted to be unaccountable, for criticism has never furnished an exhaustive analysis of any work of art. Lastly, demonstrative criticism by means of corrections or substitutions is recognized as by far the most efficient.

CHAPTER V. Taste - - - - 99

- (1) Taste is used in three senses in æsthetic discussions. The first is scientific and improper to them, the second emotive, the third creative. The difficulty of subordinating the intellect without ostracising it, since meaning is not a separable element in graphic and plastic art any more than in literature, and therefore must be harmonized with the other elements and may greatly enhance the total effect.
- (2) Parallel between the growth of taste and that of knowledge, and of both with that of virtue. The three fields distinct and the dependence of society on the discoveries of investigators in them. Occasions and temptations for disloyalty to taste considered. Data for theoretic developments are at present only discoverable in and by particular lives, hence the need of statistics about life-histories of taste in individuals. The Asiatic notions that æsthetics are

## CONTENTS

Page

*founded on revelations or metaphysics rejected. Asiatic art fundamentally similar to European. Evidence for the absolute and the conditions of advance.*

- (3) *Why the process of taste results in so much confusion to-day and so little success. How the untimely use of the process and its misapplication are a prolific source of failure in education. Our unsocial behaviour due to not realizing the true situation. Some excuse in the sudden expansion of our knowledge of art. No man's æsthetic life has yet enjoyed good health and growth continuously. The arrogance of those whose taste is strongest, itself a blight.* 121

PIVOTS - - - - - 131

CHAPTER VI. *Theory and Practice* - 135

- (1) *How should this conception of taste change a critic's outlook? By way of example, two lectures are printed as delivered. This should be regarded not merely as illustrating the foregoing arguments, but as an act inspired by accepting them as true.*
- (2) *Lecture delivered at Leicester School of Art, 1915.* 136
- (3) *Taste in Poetry: The right attitude towards poetry defined: the opinions of Coleridge, Sig. Croce, etc., contro-* 150

## CONTENTS

Page

verted. How modern anthologies illustrate an attitude benumbed by untrustworthy scientific analogies. Independent loyalty to experience advocated. The growth of taste through collective collaboration in oral and bardic poetry sketched. The same process was alive in the theatre in Shakespeare's day and should be applied to written poetry, though the possibilities of this are hampered by bad laws and presumptuous finance. Lastly examples are given of how individual poems have grown and may yet grow in their passage from mind to mind.

## CHAPTER VII. In Conclusion - - 173

- (1) Recapitulation of previous chapters, and then of the effects produced on diverse sections of the art-world by the dominance of false analogies with science.
- (2) Specialization deprecated. The difficulty and desirability of a completely human attitude. 181
- (3) What should the practical result be for readers who are persuaded? The mistakes of crystallizing ideas into dogmas and of adopting an attitude hostile to those who do not concur exemplified. To free taste from fashions and politics is an absolute necessity. 182



CONTENTS	Page
(4) <i>Practical dangers in the transfer of preference from object to object can only be obviated by fostering a temper which begets a happy tact. Nevertheless there is only one alternative to advance—failure entailing disintegration.</i>	188

## APPENDICES

A. <i>On the Nature of Value</i>	- - -	191
B. <i>On the Meaning 'Good'</i>	- - -	192
C. <i>On the Word 'Expression'</i>	- - -	194
D. <i>On Idealism</i>	- - -	199
E. <i>On Allusion in Poetry</i>	- - -	200
F. <i>On the Paramountcy of Surface in Graphic Art</i>	- - - -	203
G. <i>On Language as an Emotional Stimulant</i>	- - - -	204
H. <i>On the Insufficiency of Learning without Liking</i>	- - - -	206
EPILOGUE	- - - -	208

## INTRODUCTION

The world of taste appears confused : people, willing to expend on art money, intelligence and sensibility in far greater measure than the average educated person, yet disagree completely, not only as to the objects which they chiefly admire, but as to the standards by which they appraise them. The same thing is true, though in a less signal degree, of literary pronouncements as of art criticism. In regard to music I am not qualified to speak, but I gather that there also some disorganization of opinion has appeared.

It has long seemed to me that æsthetic mentality has for at least seventy years suffered an increasing deviation, by proximity to the immense success of science. In Conrad's story 'The End of the Tether,' a coat loaded with scrap-iron is hung close to the compass, and in consequence the ship is steered on to the rocks. The success of science has perhaps had a like effect on the most intellectual æsthetes of Paris and London. Our judgments proceed not from uncultivated senses, but from a biased cultivation of them, founded on false analogies between science and art. A mistake in logic underlies many self-disciplines. I hope to make clear exactly how logic has failed us, and what facts of psychology we have increasingly ignored. 'Seventy years' is a mere suggestion: opinion did not then *begin* to err, only this source of error began to tell about that date. The waywardness of fashion, the lunacies of taste are from of old—are perhaps proportionate to the number of those who

conceive of themselves as of a peculiar people or superior sect, and, attempting to impose by influence or advertisement, lose patience with humanity's sluggish stream.

'Tous ceux qui se regardent comme au-dessus du niveau humain dégringolent au-dessous.'<sup>1</sup> Though I combat views tainted with such disdain, my chief aim has been to re-interpret common thoughts, which we all use and misuse, but fail to think clearly : and thus to help those who hitherto have had no touch for poetry and art, to encounter the right experience ; those who have had only faint or distant acquaintance with them to wax in contemplative power ; and those who are losing this, to recover their hold.

What value has sensuous experience ? is the question. My answer seeks to keep within the light shed from those arts with which my acquaintance has been closest. Hence this is no philosophic treatise, but rather a practical handbook of hints how to sort out the fundamental withies of thought, in order to twist rope and knot ladders wherewith to climb into the towering, flowering tree of Beauty. No attempt is made to choose out, prescribe or impose any particular branch or blossom. I merely offer tests for tackle so that æsthetic experience may be achieved and ingenious intellectual counterfeits of it avoided. Its character is left entirely for discovery by the willing reader, with the presumption that it will prove more or less different in every case.

<sup>1</sup> ' *All who look down on mankind lose foothold on a declivity till they must look up to see their fellows.*'





## THE MEANING OF BEAUTY

### I

Anyone who has wanted continually to be gazing at print or picture, returning to it with delighted eagerness whenever opportunity allowed, owns a highly characterized experience of beauty in art. Beauty names the value to each of us of things we like to gaze at, repeat or listen to, even though we expect no practical changes to be wrought by them. So Truth names the value of the solution of a problem in chess or astronomy, when at last proof interlocks with counter-proof and description can tally with fact. So Goodness names the value in which we hold that temper and those actions which we genuinely believe will produce on the whole the best result in so far as we can forecast it. A 'best result' always presupposes the meaning 'good'; a 'true solution' implies the possibility of infinite others; an hour enhanced by admiration invites to fabulous æons so spent, since the meaning of each term can cover all imaginable cases.

We frequently make judgments attributing or denying these three values, and can only drop this habit by ceasing to be human. Truth can never be more valuable than when it assures us that we have not been mistaken in discerning high degrees of the other two. Some things are true which are ugly and evil; though only things that truly *are* can possess beauty and goodness. Hence the importance of keeping the meanings of these three words distinct and clear if we are to use them well.

All other values are means, expedients ; for we easily conceive of wasted actuality, health, pleasure, wealth, power, knowledge and skill, but truth, beauty, goodness, are never futile, as recognition of them is itself the benefit they propose.

Ages of blunders wore out before the most living souls, like the early Greeks, descried one or two of these three values dimly, and approached them in fables. I say 'approached,' but have no platonic ideas, or phantom entities, in view. What we approach is the acme plenitude of the faculties that yield us our present experience. This would permit the most precise use of the three words true, beautiful, good. Their mere meaning may be our sole evidence for any future they forecast. They are seed in which lie embryo events, possible, though at present unpredictable. The past, on which those meanings had not yet dawned for the mind destined to become human, was as incapable of prophesying *homo sapiens*. No doubt these meanings were already lodged in language before philosopher, artist and saint attempted to realize their implications fully, and failed.

'For neither now nor yesterday, these thoughts

Had birth, but always were.'

Ingenious misconstructions of these seasoned notions have prevailed over their simplicity. Error in high places has clouded the general mind, till the best known things appear doubtful or even probably deceptive.

Multitudes now act as though expediency were the sole value, scholars even found philosophical theories on that; but historic developments—and such scholars recognize nothing else—can only acquire significance from the application of these values.<sup>1</sup>

## II

A theory to be sufficient must arrange all the facts. Many current æsthetic theories ignore the meaning 'beauty'; they seek to evade or alter it, and not infrequently imply that ugliness may be beautiful, a contradiction in terms! Now to dissociate word and meaning is to flout a fact, to deny experience. Such efforts are possibly more creditable to the intentions than to the intelligence of these verbal contortionists.

I take then the most wide-spread meaning of the word beauty, that which applies it to admired sensuous objects.

French writers are wont to confuse themselves at the outset, as their language apparently has not two words for the meanings 'sensuous' and 'sensual.' Of late years English writers of criticism have shown a renewed tendency to use 'sensuous' as a more euphemistic synonym for 'sensual'; the initial stage of a disastrous confusion in thought. Both in life and discussion the distinction is important that sifts contemplative from bodily satisfactions

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix A., p. 191. On the Nature of Value.*



Sensual objects prompt to action, to practical changes: sensuous appearances merely stimulate contemplation—a delighted contentment with actual experience. The provinces wherein these adjectives are applicable overlap, but the two modes of approach, even where this happens, remain strictly distinguishable. A man's body may be admired by another man to whom no taint of sexual perversion adheres. Many can admire a buttercup without even the remotest sensual preoccupation: still more certainly a leaf of silver-foil or the galaxy on a frosty night. The case in regard to food and drink is as patent. We are free to admire liqueurs in decanters without imputation of a fondness for sipping them. Even the mouth of a French woman who says that her child is 'joli à croquer' need not water, in spite of the latent cannibalism of the phrase. Sensual objects may have a sensuous aspect or be capable of being viewed merely sensuously; but they then lose for the viewer their practical importance, and become mere pictures or visions. It would seem desirable by appropriating each of these words to an unique meaning to make this distinction more definite.

Because sensual desire and sensuous contemplation are stirred at the same time by a single object, we need not deny the presence of either or confuse them. The art-collector's pleasure in buying and owning a work of art is quite distinct from his pleasure in gazing at one, either in his own or another collection.

That diverse emotions are often confused together by those who experience them does not mean that they cannot and should not be distinguished. I once heard a Cambridge don recount how, in the train, while apparently buried in a book, he had taken stock of three undergraduates who were talking about 'their girls' in terms that convinced him that actual young ladies were in question. Photographs were passed from hand to hand for admiration ; at last he obtained a glimpse of one, and was surprised to recognize a reduction from an engraving of one of Reynolds' 'Virtues' from the well-known window at Oxford. Certainly these figures are not remarkable for sexual appeal ; and though a sensual ferment may have been latent, the admiration was also probably contemplative and employed the boy's whole soul. The refinement, elegance, nay even the coldness of Reynolds' conventionality must have been operative in order to create a preference over the much more direct appeal of a hundred others he might have bought and preferred. Even if he chose it merely because it reminded him of some real girl whose photograph he could not obtain, his idea of her character probably had affinities with that of Reynolds' intention, or he would have been put off by its dominance.

How define 'Beauty' ? Many proposals have been mooted, yet it is perhaps most safely classed as indefinable, like blue and red,

sweet, sour, alkaline. We merely name these sensations ; our best precision determines their causes or precedent concomitants. The perception 'blue' follows the impact of waves of a certain length on the retina ; that of 'red' results from a different length of wave. The waves are not perceived ; the sensation of colour is a part of their effect only patent when they meet a normal retina, but never patent without their very impact, or a memory or reverberation of the commotion it occasioned. However, a friend of mine boldly arraigns the idiom which runs 'this is beautiful,' but should run, he thinks, 'this beautifies me,' an opinion fashionable in one form or other and even professed at Universities.

Can we defend the usage which assumes that beauty is intrinsic, belongs not to a spectator as emotions and opinions do, but to the object viewed ? Is man's mistake so ancient ? or has common sense in this as in other cases sifted a definite meaning from among the crowd of bad shots and ill-fits that confuse the actual use of words, till the idiom holds that which alone tallies with experience ? No doubt common usage has sometimes failed ; language in its most inherent forms may not always be defensible. We say the sun sinks, though we know that it is the earth that moves us behind its rotund contour. Common sense has not corrected the idiom by the new knowledge.

Let us see whether we can uphold this its dictum, that attributes beauty to the object



not to the subject, to external existence not to idea, to matter not to human consciousness. Do we not distinguish Miss Siddal's beauty that accompanied her when she went shopping and after which common men might turn and stare, from what is called metaphorically the *beauty* of Rossetti's thoughts about it, and this last again from the beauty of his works? The felicities of choice phrase and rhythm, of well spaced composition, of exquisite pen and brush work, can each and all exist alone, as well as organized in poetic moods with profound and delicate images and analogies. The woman's face, the man's mind, the exhibition of skill, divine adjustments of proportioned spaces, intense imagination, may all and each be in some sense beautiful; yet the combined evidence of them in either drawing or poem may have a beauty of its own distinct from any other.

A brilliant superficial artist may make a successful drawing; and Rossetti made many failures, which yet imply that had they succeeded, their perfection would have been of a different order, on a grander plane, than those of the comparatively light-minded master. But the mere implication of those great powers cannot correct a clumsy,<sup>1</sup> a tired, a distracted or over-wrought use of materials, any more than a beautiful model can compensate for bad painting. Yet when Rossetti is felicitous he may at once be out of reach of all but a few rare masters. No doubt in talk we often

<sup>1</sup> *Physical clumsiness may sometimes be taken advantage of, and made more effective than skill. See Chapter V, pp. 36, 37.*

confuse and confound these diverse kinds of beauty, yet surely we can distinguish them clearly when we bring our minds to it? Then what have these occasions in common, that the same word serves them all? This is our problem, not to define the word, but to discover what the occasions for its use must have in common.

There are vulgar faces and beautiful faces; and sometimes the expression is lovely though the features be plain; but in every case beauty is not a part of a face as a nose is, nor a property of it as the pink of cheeks, the liquidness of eyes or the sensuality of the lips may be. It belongs to the whole face, then, as size and shape do. One may have beautiful eyes ill-assorted as to mouth and chin; in which case not the face, and on the other hand, not the iris, nor the lashes, nor the lids are commended, but the eyes as a whole; and if fire and blackness are alone praised we understand that other items were not to match; and if we say 'she has beautiful brows' we may either be considering that they almost redeem less happy features, or considering them as a whole, the curve or changes of planes over which they are pencilled, their fullness or wing-like spread. For even a single lash may be a beautiful whole, and lie on a piece of notepaper with a tapering curve that makes it an organism like a frond; for is it not a sequence of exquisitely related parts? Yes, the beauty of a face is a whole of congruent constituents, admirable perhaps considered singly but cer-

tainly so taken together. Change the proportion and arrangement of those items ever so slightly, and the beauty alters ; change them so considerably as to destroy their consonance, and it is gone.

So true is this, that the alteration of beauty by fatigue has been commonly remarked, and the jealous have tried to upset the balance of their rival's features by adding nail wounds or splashes of vitriol. From this we may conclude that the crudest conception of beauty always views it as the admirable appearance of an organized whole. Only, the faces vulgarly preferred have obviously striking features, scenically disposed, the ready-made tell-tales of a capable, sentimental or sensual disposition, which, winning easy admiration, may even repel the refined : whereas a more distinguished beauty is the fitting index of a finely adjusted soul, though occasionally it is left unused, half animated as it were, by the failing character. But both kinds are equally arrangements of parts and properties in effective proportions ; both deserve the peculiar admiration they obtain. Thus in the parallel case we recognize the validity of contradictory descriptions ; that of the child who thinks a bough villainously slashed his face, and that of the scientist who forms a clear image of the mechanism of its recoil. Because they are proper to diverse levels of knowledge we allow both some truth.

Yet possibly some absolutely simple things are called beautiful. If you chose from a jeweller's bench one from a number of pieces



of butterfly wing cut into shapes for mounting, as of a more beautiful blue, what would you mean? Not merely that the range of its shifting shades was more intense; other colours equally intense might not so please. Beauty can be synonym neither for blue nor for intensity. Would you mean that in whatever quantity the colour of that piece has your preference? Or might an elephant, a mountain or a town of it prove overwhelming, a mere eyesore? Or should we still say "a lovely tint; only there is too much of it for these organic wholes"? Are you, perhaps, merely prophesying that it will look most becoming mounted and worn by a well-dressed lady? or mentally restoring it to the perfect insect? Or do you mean that it is less likely than those other pieces to be changed by its whereabouts, for surroundings affect nothing so greatly as they do colours? This peculiar sheen is not easily altered; it will flash in all but darkness. Though it become green under the flank of a yellow bowl, and purple reflecting a rose, yet to a rare extent it refuses contamination by proximity to darker colours. Now it is possible, not only that many shapes and sizes of such blue are beautiful organic wholes, but that these tints in themselves are such wholes; for they are not derived from pigment, but from an arrangement of neutral scales, being of the nature of iridescence like the stripes on a jay's wing, the rainbow, and the clear noon sky, that result from arrangements of particles not so coloured, a play of light. Though we cannot perceive, without

a microscope, how these particles are inter-related, their grouping results in these lively tints, that respond and react in more ways than colours produced by dyes ; which is perhaps what in such a case is meant by *more beautiful*.

Most colours are only beautiful in definite organic wholes of which they form parts. Are we even certain that a tint can be seen apart from such an whole ? Though Rossetti declared apple-green and the brown of the best photographs of that period to be his favourites, he may have meant that they were more frequently productive of beautiful harmonies in pictures or in the decoration of rooms, and in his mind have always supplied certain familiar positions and proportions for their occurrence. They rendered royal, other tints only menial, service. That we enjoy looking at it remains the all-sufficient reason for asserting an object to be beautiful. Our arguments however suggest that the more complexity, the greater beauty will be, granted an equal felicity in organization. Whatever the exact explanation may be, for anyone calling the tint of *Morpho Rhetenor's* wing more emphatically beautiful than that of *Morpho Menelaus*, I think there is no need to class it as fundamentally exceptional, but as more than probably a case in order.

A similar argument may account for single notes of sound being called beautiful. Such objects are all essentially complex and to disentangle them from manifold concomitants is very difficult. Of course, any number

of mistakes are made ; often an object simply has not got the quality attributed to it. Such mistakes are generally however due either to carelessness, or to the overruling of taste by social decorum, snobbishness, or religious or intellectual convictions.

Beauty usually designates proportionate arrangements of constituents which we love to contemplate, whether these be also a part, as the eyes of the face, the face of the head, or not—and may be applied to cloud or landscape, sculpture or painting, building or town, music, speech or thought. Yet when a town has many fine buildings and happy perspectives, men will call it beautiful, though seen as a whole it be dominated by some obvious defect or an unlucky situation. This is plainly a less strictly proper use of the word, since those buildings and vistas are the wholes really commended, not the town. So the important thing is to make sure to what the adjective is applied, and for what arrangement of parts contemplation is invited—since there is here abundant opportunity for misunderstanding. Just as, in the parallel case of the child's misadventure with the bough,<sup>1</sup> we recognized that since he was only conscious of a few of the circumstances, his description seemed true to him, and that not even the scientist can give a complete description of such an event, ultimate truth about even so simple an occurrence being beyond our means, quite as much as a final explanation of beauty. Take the often cited instance of the flayed

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 11.

bull's carcase in the Louvre, by Rembrandt. In this case it is the painting we call beautiful : the object itself has no doubt some comeliness and may impress some minds agreeably, but whatever pleasure they derive from contemplating it or in recognizing its suitability to show off that kind of painting, such pleasure cannot be compared with that taken in Rembrandt's rendering, which is both rarer and more perfect in its kind. But if we place the same master's ' Supper at Emmaus ' beside it, the problem is altered : other kinds of beauty are wedded to that of this panel ; and few minds would not immediately admit that, however beautiful the painting of the carcase, the picture of the supper is far more so. And we may note also that this latter gave opportunities for more subtle and varied felicities in the manipulation of oil paint. Yet the models for the Christ, disciples, and inn-servant, had we met them, might have been dubbed eye-sores, being much less fine specimens of their types than the bull's carcase. It is firstly the emotions that flood those faces and their dramatic inter-relations, secondly the proportioned spacing of the various tints and qualities of oil paint, that are beautiful ; yet these parallel beautiful wholes are inseparable, occupy the very same space, and are so fused that they form a third whole more beautiful than either.

Now let us consider a further aspect of occasions for the use of this word. A gleam of sun delights the sketcher's eye and ' straight



again is gone.' These proportions between shadow and shine were just what had been lacking before. A woman may take her beauty into a perfectly dark room, and it will return with her, having been there though invisible for hours, just as the next gleam of sun restores the occasion for our sketch. An embalmed body may be laid in a dark vault for ages ; and Rome went wild, when the ancient body of a girl of sixteen was discovered in the fifteenth century, as fresh as when loving hands had closed her tomb. The beauty of Queen Nefertete acquires additional enchantment because her life-like portraits have remained buried for twenty-two hundred years. Imaginative people at least are excited and delighted by the thought that earth's cleanest soils of rock and sand may be honeycombed with cells containing beautiful persons and beautiful furniture. Even if some are never to be discovered, their possible presence enhances for such souls the value of our planet.

Beauty then is something that may have some value even when it is to be for ever quite unknown, retains its value when lost to sight, and is at least as delightful after centuries of complete obscurity. Like invisible stars it is there, an arrangement of parts exactly calculated to impress certain eyes, certain minds, just as the light of those stars which never reaches us is there and exactly calculated to impress normal retinas, should any such exist within eye-shot or light-shot. Beauty is no more subjective than light. There are

eyes of every degree of dimness, but till blindness is reached they all see light. So the vast majority of men see beauty, though their sense for it may be dull or troubled or diseased, in a thousand degrees and kinds. And the beauty all see in every case implies that they enjoy gazing at an appearance, this, when at all complex is the property of a whole, due to a consonance of parts, and consists in a bloom imparted by felicities in adjustment to the heterogeneous constituents of a sensuous appearance. May I suggest that the standard which these judgments approach (for all probably come short in some degree) is inherent in the human organism, so that all normal men at a certain level of development tend to admire the same objects? Such admiration is always present in proportion as the organism is truly itself. Therefore as a colour-blind person might conceivably measure the various wave-lengths which produce colours that he could not distinguish, so arrangements man would admire might be sorted from others by a suppositional Martian who felt no kindred admiration, because such admiration was consequent on diversity of arrangement intrinsic to objects, as the sensation of colour follows the impact of various wave-lengths. The eyes of insects, conveying totally different impressions to ours, may all reveal less organized and less harmonious worlds. Eyes which discern more perfect worlds may not exist, or if they exist may continue the same graph which represents ours as having risen above the

insects' in ability to perceive beauty. A perfect man is a mere speculation; a non-human and still more perfect admirer of beauty is yet more so. We can discuss such extensions of experience, but we cannot realize their implications fully. Material objects perceived by other than sensuous qualities, could only possess a metaphorical beauty: the case moreover is unimaginable. Therefore this criterion of the organization of complex appearances cannot be used by men as they at present are, though when they normally become the whole of what they might be, they may be able to use it. Until then taste must serve as a makeshift. The point may obtain additional relief by considering the case of an art-lover whose limbs became paralysed. A friend bought for him a wax maquette by a famous sculptor of whom he was an admirer, and sent it as a Christmas gift. The day was drawing in when it was unpacked, and his wife had dressed for some errand abroad. First she set the statuette near the window, but the light was too poor: next she placed it on a stool in the glow of a well-built fire, and it showed up much better. She went, and her husband admired it till he dozed; when he woke there was a change, the fire had fallen in and blazed; the heat had caused a raised arm to descend slowly, and he had the torment of helplessly watching all its beauty droop and change and fold and well-nigh gutter until only a shapeless mass of wax remained. His mind had not wearied of the

charm and grown stale, as it might have done had he owned the maquette for years or even months ; he had not grown indifferent to it by learning to admire finer beauties, as may have happened in other cases ; no, its very charm, those proportions clothed in those surfaces, closely mated to keen observation, emotional accent and daring invention, were prized the more passionately now all was at the mercy of that treacherous housewife Memory.

Change was in this case only in the object, not in the mind : the beauty destroyed was evidently not that of an opinion or emotion.

Beauty, then, is intrinsic, and occurs when the appearance of objects forms an organic whole, of which the constituents so accord together that the value of them thus grouped seems greater than that of the sum of them considered singly ; for then all seem necessary and nothing lacks.<sup>1</sup>

And this is strictly true of all things called beautiful, from the furtively kissed photograph of a vulgar actor or actress, to the most refined and exquisite works of art, even when these are exempt from all association with sexual or other sensual desires.

<sup>1</sup> *For the technical discussion of the problems involved in the conception of intrinsic values see Dr. G. E. Moore's Philosophical Studies. Though the concept of beauty as intrinsic is not more indisputable than any other philosophical position, the arguments which have been advanced in support of it must be countered before any subjective theory can claim assent ; since it and not the subjective notion is the commonsense view, that implied in language.*



### III

I began by saying that I should apply the word beauty to admired sensuous objects, as is most commonly done; yet almost immediately I needed it for imaginations and thoughts. In this I followed an universal precedent, for beauty is used metaphorically of immaterial structures, the resemblance implied being always to material ones.

Here we come up against a hoary confusion which is still hale and prevalent. For an example let us turn to poetry which so many good folk value for wisdom. The thought is so beautiful that they will accept clumsy or inadequate words. An immaterial structure supersedes the sensuous phrases, the image is forgotten, its significance so shines. Yet wise saws and lovely meanings can exist in prose; poetical form is not essential to them, though such and such an exquisite notion may be vital to a given poem. Poetry is the fusion of perfect form with thought which may be valuable or otherwise taken by itself. A poem may remain equally admirable even after we have discovered that its doctrine, once accepted as wise, is really foolish. Nevertheless one poet may be greater than another whose poetry is equally beautiful, because more of his thought is part of a well-proportioned immaterial structure of great beauty.

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.’  
These lines dominate some minds as the  
Athanasian Creed may have done, by the

supposed desirability of the thing asserted and by echoes of ancient religious and philosophical thought with which they resound. Yet is it not obvious that 'Beauty is Truth' must equal 'truth is truth' if it be true and is then a tautology? Whereas if it be a verbal blunder, though it may stand for some such meaning as 'Beauty is as near an approach to the real truth as what we suppose to be true' the phrase is not adequate to carry so much, and its burden is a highly speculative opinion which overrides all that apparently true part of our experience which is described as ugly. Words must either mean what they say or be faultily employed, where their truth is concerned. It is generally forgotten that The Urn speaks, not Keats. Very naturally it makes a highly confused and prejudiced statement in favour of its own wisdom and value. How human! was it not created by men of like passions with ourselves? Still philosophy tries to avoid such pitfalls. 'Ye know on earth' is not a natural address for the poet, who would have said 'we know.'<sup>1</sup> Hence the whole couplet was spoken by 'The Urn' at any rate when first conceived, and assuredly with far greater propriety. This well illustrates

<sup>1</sup> *The punctuation of these two lines is without quotes in the manuscript. When it was first published a dash was added after the second comma, perhaps to limit what 'The Urn' said to 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.' In the Lamia volume quotes supplemented the dash. The dash and quotes may not have originated with Keats, whereas the 'Ye' certainly did; though he apparently accepted this bad punctuation without perceiving that it conflicted with his text.*

how Beauty in poetry is inviolable and irrefragable, logic fails like a chisel against diamond. Assertions are æsthetic not by inherent truth, but by perfect harmony between the hows, the whys, the whens, the by whoms, and other factors which compose the organic whole.

But it will be observed that Keats himself wrote in a letter, 'What the imagination seizes as Beauty *must be* Truth.' Does he doubt his urn himself? or why this unfortunate well-nigh pathetic 'must be'? How strange, if all we have been told be true, that he did not write: 'What the mind seizes as true, is beautiful?' or: 'What the mind seizes as true, the imagination seizes as beautiful?' thus, we should have approached an unimpeachable definition of great literature: 'What the intellect grasps as true, the imagination composes into beautiful wholes.' But, as they stand, the best construction to put on his words is that, they *would*, but *do* not say: 'Beauty and Truth are equally characters of the ideal and present in the real.' But to assert, as his most recent interpreter does, that *all that is* is both true and beautiful, only empties both words of meaning and annuls the distinction between them. Lies are; and the sensuous appearance of some things are purposed and deadly lies,—for instance, decoy ducks. But lies are neither true nor necessarily beautiful though it be true that they occur.

Taken at its best Keats' statement must always remain lopsided, since Goodness is

equally necessary to the ideal and present in the real. The possibility of the ideal is not known, but only inferred, or revealed to ecstasy, and thus resembles the vanishing point in perspective, ever to be approached, never to be arrived at. But the important fact about these values is that loyalty to them integrates, while neglect of them degrades, human character. Experience proves this. If, and when, and where they coalesce, may be left over for discovery by those who shall have indefinitely outgrown us. There is every reason to suppose, that had this view been presented to Keats, he would have accepted it gladly as equally beautiful, true and good. Indeed he virtually did so accept it, which fact has inspired his most recent eulogist to strangely confuse with *the principle of beauty*, a crippled interpretation of the religious phrase 'dying into life.' These last words may be better understood by juxtaposing their original source, the text 'I lay down my life that I may take it again,' with La Rochefoucauld's maxim 'La magnanimité méprise tout pour avoir tout.'<sup>1</sup> There we have an imaginative figure for the central spiritual experience, side by side with an objective observer's intelligent statement. They agree as to the resultant perception, that nothing has importance, not even the avoidance of death, when weighed against a diminution of integrity. Willingness to die in order to preserve from dissolution life's harmonized

<sup>1</sup> "Great-mindedness disdains everything in order to possess everything."



work, the soul, is fundamental in noble characters, it even sometimes offers them an unequalled lever in affairs. For only that minister exerts his full weight in a cabinet who is known to be ready to resign. So he who has in agony and resolve laid down his life, wields a redoubled influence. Such a self-dedication Keats had undoubtedly been through and has perhaps adumbrated, though with less than his usual imaginative felicity, in the second *Hyperion*. But to attach his chief value as a poet to this self-devotion is to exaggerate fantastically. Many others, both poets and versifiers, have been as devout. This self-dedication is equally patent in Matthew Arnold, Newman, and Keble—therefore cannot give them their various rank as poets. Wholeheartedly worshipping ideals or principles of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, all three remained immersed in the insoluble mystery of evil, as Keats himself pathetically did, and as all men must.

If in a verse epistle Keats cries :

‘ O never will the prize

High reason, and the love of good and ill

Be my award ! ’

he does it with a philosophically blind eye, even as the Hebrew Prophet declared that God created ‘ the evil and the good.’ The confusion of terms is due to the ardour and exaltation of aspiration : so keenly they both appreciate the goodness and beauty of the universe that they leap in the dark to grab at a self-contradictory resolution of the problem of evil, which nevertheless does

equal credit to both their hearts. Though natural, dramatic and lyrical, such exclamations are not philosophical, and can only be supposed to be so by dazzled minds.

This popular treatment of these famous lines well illustrates how neglect of the principle of organic wholes drives critics into stultifying and issueless pudding-bags. As a consequence they confuse subjective with objective elements ; concrete experience with ecstatic or desired exhalations from it, and the actual meaning of words, with meanings that they may have helped to suggest in some elaborate context.

#### IV

Other objects besides those which we admire form wholes and have proportions and arrangements of parts, as they have size and shape. So it is not all definite dispositions of constituents which are beautiful. Our taste is the sole criterion as to which can feast the eye or ear ; though there may, as we have seen, be an unknown criterion like an as yet too distant star, or the composition of the electron, awaiting discovery.

Efforts have lately been made to discover the secret of beauty in Greek vases and old-master pictures, by means of geometry. These theories apparently fail to prove that ugly vases and bad pictures could not provide as interesting demonstrations. The suggestion that divisions into halves, thirds and

equal parts are inæsthetic is certainly wrong, for in Greek Temples the right half tallies with the left, as recto and verso do in the openings of beautiful books. The human body, like every symmetrical vase, duplicates its own measures : and rhymed couplets are founded on an unity halved. It is at most true that such proportions are too obvious to excite admiration when they stand in single nakedness. No proportion abstracted from the sensuous whole of which it forms part can be conceived of as beautiful, nor does there appear any likelihood of one geometric construction being preferred often or constantly to another. Therefore that vases and pictures can be so analysed is no proof that they were so planned. And how incomplete and clumsy a description does the best analysis attempted amount to ! The French poet may very possibly be right when he says : “ Un vocabulaire commun—le plus précis qui existe—nous permettait à chaque instant de ne pas nous mésentendre. L’algèbre et la géométrie sur le modèle desquelles je m’assure que l’avenir saura construire un langage pour l’intellect, nous permettaient, de temps à autre, d’échanger des signaux précis.”<sup>1</sup> A language describes indifferently the ugly and insignificant as well as the beautiful ; it cannot therefore form an æsthetic criterion

<sup>1</sup> *The common mastery of a vocabulary the most exact extant, allowed us constantly to avoid misunderstandings. On the pattern of algebra and geometry, I am persuaded, a language for the intellect will in time be constructed, for they enabled us to exchange, from time to time, quite unambiguous signals.*

but at most one for intelligibility. The same argument is fatal to the pretensions of psychology to discover a cause or a criterion of beauty. Everything is equally psychological that occurs in the psyche. The psychologist can only unravel the thread, which is here conscious, there unconscious, as he finds it, but he can furnish no criterion by which to prefer one tangle to another or to a neatly wound skein. The work of art is a result; its value does not depend on its past history, but solely on its relation to admiration.<sup>1</sup> All these suggested methods of appraising it need to prove that the analysis of the meanest milk jug, the most worthless picture, the most disorganized ravings, would not also tax their utmost skill. They all imply the fallacy that beauty can mean that which conveys verifiable information, or is knowledge. On the other hand it has been suggested 'that good to contemplate'<sup>2</sup> is a definition which meets the case, 'good' being indefinable instead of 'beauty': but this, though possibly true, only removes the problem a single step, and complicates it by all the difficulties peculiar to the meaning 'good'<sup>3</sup>; while yet there may be beauties the contemplation of which disintegrates ethical responsiveness while developing æsthetic sensibility. Assertions which amount to this are frequently made both by æsthetes and moralists, though it would seem impossible to prove them from either point of view.

<sup>1</sup> See *Appendix A. On the Nature of Value*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. E. G. Moore. *Principia Ethica*.

<sup>3</sup> *Appendix B. On the meaning 'Good,'* p. 192.



If beauty is the quality we ascribe to admired sensuous wholes, if it designates the proportionate arrangement of the parts and properties of appearances as related to our admiration, even as light is related to eyes, but in no other sense ; then beauty is a fact, not an emotion or opinion, and is as inseparable a part of the universe as we ourselves : and though all men became totally blind to it, would patiently await rediscovery in the proportions and arrangements of complex wholes of frequent recurrence or of great permanence. From which it follows that realism, which declares beauty to depend on the relation between one object and another, or verisimilitude, is not a sufficient theory. And impressionism, which makes the value of a work of art consist in its being a faithful record of a single moment of one man's experience, also falls short. And expressionism,<sup>1</sup> which makes it consist in satisfying a precedent need or emotion, is also a wide shot, and patently many things do this that are not beautiful. While the Arts and Craft hedonism and utilitarianism, which think beauty results from the joy of the craftsman in achieving a perfect adaptation of materials to the longest possible continuance of use, must fail ; as must of course all political theories, whether or not derived from this last—such as the assertion that mediæval art is beautiful because the craftsmen lived more humane lives, or the antithetical assertion that Egyptian art is supreme because it expresses the

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix C. On the word Expression, p. 194.*

mastery of overlords or supermen. Whereas much of both Mediæval and Egyptian art is obviously bad, and outclassed by work produced under opposite political conditions. Again, even the virtuoso's ultimate exploitation of the possibilities latent in the materials, combined with an absolute respect for their limitations, has led many astray. Yet this doctrine is truer than those who advance it imagine ; since recognizable forms need not be ugly, and therefore meaning is an essential part of the complete capacity of materials in which they can be conveyed. Lastly, idealisms<sup>1</sup> which consider that beauty inheres either in the nature of consciousness, or in that of problematic less illusory worlds than ours, are not correct. Its function can neither be to reveal truth about the universe, nor truth about our souls ; the sciences of physics and psychology are addressed to these discoveries. Beauty merely brings us to a poise—a contented contemplation of actual appearances.

## V

May I be forgiven if I now repeat the foregoing arguments in a slightly different form which may yield further illumination. Theories simply cannot suffice, if the idiom is apt that asserts beauty to be intrinsic in beautiful objects as light is in suns. Of course the works which various theorists have admired may all be admirable, only not chiefly for the reasons given ; yet it is probable that

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix D. On Idealism, p. 199.*

holding a false theory does in time cause taste to become false to experience. Realism is the oldest and most widespread error ; the ancients, like the vulgar, seem often to have admired verisimilitude most, and the boom of science has reinforced this very natural bias. Nevertheless there is enough beauty of high quality (music, architecture, etc.) in which verisimilitude is either absent or plays an obviously insignificant rôle, to put this contention out of court. Nothing is ever beautiful merely for verisimilitude, but only when this is arranged in certain proportions with other qualities. Otherwise one American clock might be called the beautiful statue of another, and the Chinese shirt made exactly to reproduce the worn, torn, stained and faded pattern, might have been a work of art, not merely a product of mingled ingenuity and imbecility. Impressionism and expressionism have far less claim to have discovered the *sine quâ non* of art. They have come into fashion in a world be-dinned by the redoubling of drums to celebrate the victories of science. In that noise it was so natural to think that art, like a treatise or a diagram, was valued for conveying information about something else, psychology, of course, or well-nigh as often unsophisticated experience ; and art may carry such information ; but so, too, may treatises and diagrams, that make no æsthetic claim. The artist must never inform alone, but only in proportion with other doings and in subordination to the arrangement of the materials he works with. Post-

impressionism with its pullulating chapels seems never to break away from this error, but modifies it endlessly, proclaiming ever narrower magic formulæ, open sesames, panaceas and paragon nostrums, as though art were politics, and artists mountebanks.

Now beauty is never beauty for a general reason but always for one that applies in no other case, namely because those particular elements are for this once happily organized. We have lately been told that Flemish art was inferior to Italian for the general reason that it less perfectly represented solids and was too fond of heterogeneous observations. The great authority of Michael Angelo was cited to sanction this error, though he had never seen the best Flemish work and was as dogmatic and prejudiced as such a great soul could be. Yet evidently some Flemish like some Chinese pictures though not attempting a perfect roundness in the rendering of human form, are far more beautiful than many Italian or Dutch pictures which carry this preoccupation to insane lengths. A picture is and must ever be an embellished surface. In the greatest pictures the illusion that ignores the surface is counterbalanced by a brushwork which insists on its presence and by an use of lines and planes which re-establish it. Where the whole effort has gone to create the illusion of an hole instead of a panel the result has always been lamentable.<sup>1</sup> Mantegna, Piero della Francesca, and Carlo

<sup>1</sup> See *Appendix F.* p. 203.



Crivelli in as many different ways harmonize elegance of proportions and variety and casualness of detailed observation with decorative felicity, as in yet other ways do Van Eyck and Durer. That the Italian effort was continued longer, in more centres, by a greater variety and eminence of gifts, is the true reason for ranking it higher.

Neither are such general reasons as utility and delight in sound workmanship a cause of beauty. All the joy of the craftsman may lighten the heart of the man who makes a cork cathedral—probably does: what else could sustain him? The chair is not made beautiful by the fact that it may be comfortably sat in for ages; and the soundest kitchen table will not compare with the eighteenth century satinwood which is the pride of the drawing-room, however well it serve its purpose. The exploitation of the opportunities latent in his materials, is the last trench of the puritan æsthete, the one-thing-necessary man; in it he feels safe. But no, he must shift again; for opportunities native to the skilled use of his materials consist in their capacity for wedding certain curves, certain shapes, certain masses, which can be effectively juxtaposed and combined; and that becomes insensibly their capacity for yielding to the promptings of imagination, emotion, or idea in this or that direction. The artist's workmanship often has a closer, a more constant relation to his psyche than his shadow holds to his body. And thus troop back upon the puritan virtuoso all those

qualities which his theory was intended to hold off and ostracise.

Cézanne has been recommended for a strangely undeserved throne among modern artists by the fact that he was so made up as to be incapable of any human breadth or richness ; and thus confined to a quasi-scientific effort combining immediate observation with technical bluntness. No doubt, in spite of his disabilities, his devotion was rewarded by a naïve intensity of some real value. Nevertheless the comparison of his achievement with those of more comprehensively endowed masters is beginning to be acknowledged ridiculous, notwithstanding the glamour of the art dealer's financial portents. To equal his production with Giotto's was always to be even less blind than perverse. The meaning of appearances which he pig-headedly strove to discount is of course an integral part of their æsthetic value for all great art whether Eastern or Western. His ' Look on a head as though it were an apple ' advised an imitation of scientific impartiality, which had no cogency at all, for the simple reason that a head is not an apple. To look on a head as a head must embrace all that it radiates of character and spiritual effectiveness : for which Ricard and Watts are the modern masters who seem most adequate since Ingres. The human import of an object creates occasions for the most divine modifications of touch, and discovers in the materials used proprieties for suggesting inflections of unfathomable intention. Opportunities for the most miraculous

use of chalks on paper occur chiefly when Watteau has a lady or gentleman in dainty dress before his mind's eye ; then his hand surpasses itself in making the significant marks, instinct with the exquisite possibilities of both chalk and paper and yet divinely respectful of their limitations. Brushwork never fits colours to forms with such marvellous felicity as when Titian's imagination glows with Ariadne's fond attempt to escape the invasion of Bacchus with his riotous crew. After imagination had supplanted his invention and skill in its fire for years, if mere cynicism such as that supposed to have inspired the ' Danae ' at Madrid can arouse him to a virtuosity which to some minds and moods may seem the more astonishing because of its apparently strange occasion, that is because excess in one direction causes human nature to recover elasticity by a swing to the opposite pole—as a cloyed taste for sweets may reachieve fineness by learning to appreciate olives, Stilton cheese, high game and venison. Besides, may not Flaubert reasonably have claimed that such cynicism contributes to a superior beauty, being more profound, ' plus triste ' and more final, than ecstasies and exultations ? In any case a theme and its import only furnish occasions for the exploitation of oil-paint and canvas, that one among graphic means which has a range most comparable to the voice or the written word. As one theme prompts a lyric, another satire, so the creative moods vary from enchantment and exhilaration through irritations, indig-

nations, exasperations, to despair and cynicism. The greatest art without a trace of strain fully employs the possibilities of the theme, and of the artist's æsthetic character, subordinated to the mood and materials chosen, so manifold is its perfection. The composition of such a picture as the ' Danae ' is really as perfect as its painting ; the major relation that a passage of brilliant quality has is that to the work as a whole, its occurrence on just that section of the canvas, its juxtaposition with this quiet passage or that contour. To say that a piece cut from the canvas will never seem to be the work of a bad painter, though true, is to treat the infinite relations involved in such a complex achievement as though they were as few and as obvious as a five-finger exercise. There is vastly more than mere brushwork involved in a masterpiece : though the handling of a face when cut out may attest the master, as a single stone hand or foot may the sculptor, the whole picture or statue furnished proof of many first-rate qualities that the fragment yields no evidence of, and had a beauty distinct from that of any fragment, namely the beauty of the whole.

When poetry has jaded herself by straining after the ideal flowers of heroic styles, the greatest poet will have at least one good reason for culling with curious discrimination the flowers of evil. Not only do incidents of poignant beauty occur in the progress of failure to despair, but moods of despondency and cynicism are as fit to wed beauties of

rhythm and diction as any other, and may be braced by as keen observation and instinct with as intimate sympathy. Every constituent counts, none are superfluous. In a beautiful object no association has modified its form that was not essential to its full effect. The fact that the pigment of many modern masters was obviously squeezed from a lead tube and mixed in a factory, and that the canvas they used was never chosen to enhance a particular distribution of this body by nicely selected brushes, must undoubtedly detract from their achievement in the eyes of past masters, whether Chinese, European or Japanese. The act of painting needs not less but more docility to an inaudible music than that of dancing to the audible rhythm and beat, only perfected when the sound seem soul to the form. The pulse of the painter's ecstasy should move relatively to materials, theme and import, as the dancer's steps and gestures do to the table or stage on which she performs, to the clothes she wears, and these intangible garments in which the customs and mentality of herself and her race drape her. The least, the most unimaginable refinement, serves the effect, and is inseparable from *that* success.

In acting, not only the assumed character, but that resigned by the assumer, is of the first importance ; for his body is his material. The price we are obliged to set on his abnegation is all added to the wonder of his creation. Even accepted failure, as when an old man sketches the mood or bearing of a young girl,



becomes a beauty that all her grace could never rival, as the woodenness of the marionette helps the necessary ineloquence of its gestures to prove yet more enchantingly successful, yet more adorably pathetic, than could have been that of the character impersonated.

So complex is the simplicity of beauty, woven like a white scarf off the spools of the rainbow, from which the thread of none can be missed or used more liberally than in its determined proportion, without staining such perfect candour. Finally Art must be thought of as saying merely 'look,' Music merely 'listen,' also as being fully apprehended only by the equals or superiors of the inventor in delicately organized complexity. Such organization may be the temporary achievement of an inspired moment, or the more or less assured character of a disciplined life. Therefore even to-day the great works of the past have not found their due audience, but appeal, as all art must, to the future. Contemporaneous admiration is always hoodwinked by irrelevant circumstances; the fit circle can only be assembled by time, when the passions and interests of the moment have been laid to sleep, and from among those who, in each succeeding epoch, far from desiring to be in the movement, hold themselves wisely aloof from the delusive fashions and crazes of their day.

## PIVOTS

Perfect beauty is unknown.

Beauty is not defined but merely named, as colours are ; it is an attribute of wholes, as size and shape are.

Beauty is not practical, we can neither eat it nor use it. We kiss a woman, not her beauty, which may even fascinate while she repels. We may deplore her existence but not that of her beauty, which separated from her character would still be welcome.

Beauty is not an expedient, but makes resort to expedients imperative, that we may protect it, pore over it, and promote its influence.

Æsthetic contemplation is its own end and strives to effect nothing else in the world.

Value belongs, not to forerunning events nor to the separate elements that went to produce it, but to the result. A child's beauty is not that of its parents or that of their love or that of the food it has eaten.

Spiritual beauty and intellectual beauty metaphorically liken abstract to sensuous structures.

In art, the beauty of the impulse or of the object represented is never the same as that of the completed work. The appearance of a hideous object may be beautifully used, or that

of a lovely object inæsthetically introduced. The amount of truth either to emotion or to fact or to theory is never the cause either of a good or of a bad result.

Beauty is often as distinct from its sources as the rose is from the manure which feeds the tree's roots.

Beauty is in the world. To cherish it in memory prompts us to seek it everywhere.

Beauty is rarely simple and always supposes completeness.

Pictures and poetry are always beautiful for a particular reason, that is, because their constituents are organized to a nicety : never for a general reason, as that they are classical or romantic, realistic or the reverse, belong to this period or that political wing, embody a moral or a cynical temper, are religious or philosophical, confirm ideas or contradict them.

Glorious and base works of art may alike be so analysed as to seem to tell tales about their author's likely habits of mind or body. The probabilities and doubts so raised are incapable of adding to or removing from their beauty a single iota. Any interest such surmises have is scientific and at best of most dubious validity.

Art says only ' Look ! How beautiful ! '

Music only 'Listen! How lovely!'  
For both, to give precedence to any other  
thought is suicidal.

With some such laconics Pallas Athena might  
consent to case in casque, cuirass and tassels  
the essential nakedness of her sister Aphrodite.

## ÆSTHETIC EXPERIENCE

I

I shall use the adjective æsthetic in its commonest acceptation as distinguishing the faculty which is moved at beauty, and also for the complementary claim made for objects that their appearance is calculated to succeed in moving those sensitive to beauty. Attempts have been made to use 'æsthetic' for quite raw or unsophisticated sensuous perception; but only because the theory to be raised required an artificial basis, being impressionistic and subjective.

Now a careful scrutiny discovers in every æsthetic experience two organized wholes. The first consists of the admired sensuous appearance, the second is the experience, and includes the first as well as the admirer's reactions. We often pass from talking of the one to talking of the other without notice, and so confuse our minds. We have as it were a small circle complete in itself contained within a larger one. The first is the sensible appearance of an object, the second is heterogeneous, including the first, and thoughts, associations, imaginations, which are provoked in the admirer and evidence his mentality. This larger circle may and should present a structure as fine as that of the admired image, but of course is as rarely perfect, though it is always quite distinct from any object's appearance which can form only one part of it. Now an idea or arrangement of ideas, an imagination or a character may occupy the place of the small circle in an experience of



admiration, and in these cases we speak of 'intellectual' or 'spiritual' beauty.

An admired sensuous appearance is always composite like the bodies of plants and animals ; its parts are often of various size, value and importance. Though all be necessary to its full effect, some can be looked on as dominant, others as subservient. The constitution of societies—tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, and a nearer approach to communistic equality than commonwealths have ever yet made, might be used as fit comparison for such complexities, but the possible diversity of æsthetic arrangement is immensely greater than that of known governments.

One of the commonest errors is to use one work of art as a standard by which to judge others:—to say *this* is not like *that*, *which is beautiful*, therefore *this* is ugly. Thus to imply that the possibilities of beauty are limited by our experience up to date, is comparable to the bigotry of a naturalist who should refuse to acknowledge an animal because the notion of such an organism had never occurred to him, and therefore try to destroy the single specimen discovered. A former official of the Louvre is even suspected of having made away with a fragment of the base of the Venus of Milo, because letters cut on it showed that the sculptor's name was not sufficiently illustrious to endorse his prejudice as to the supremacy of its value. The attempt to limit the æsthetic field or the scientific field, and declare that beyond a certain boundary only impossibilities find room, is a natural effect of the

wish that man feels to maintain some proportion between his ideas and the universe. That the intellect should be adequate to the object presented for study, is an ideal demand, which an admission of the vastness of our ignorance, as compared with our knowledge, oppresses. The attainment of this ideal, as of others, remains possible, and its probability can only be estimated by prejudice, not by reason. To conclude is pleasant but premature. There is no better case for limiting æsthetic experience in any direction ; we probably share it with butterflies and birds, and why not with plants ? He is a poor æsthete who cannot relish beauty in flowers, because the Byzantine mosaics are divinely clumsy. Though even philosophers are ready to assert that there are some things man will never know, instead of contenting themselves with what they can know—namely, that there are vast numbers which are still ignored. We might have looked upon our larger circle as containing many smaller ones. (1) The perceived image of the physical phenomenon or a group of ideas comparable to it. (2) The character of the admirer in so far as he is conscious of it. (3) The intimate sense which he has of man's perfected body and character, by which he conceives a grace and effectiveness which his actual body and soul render impossible for him. (4) The ideas and culture fatally his, imposed by his position in history ; as a chief in the stone age or an eighteenth-century gentleman would neither of them be expected to understand or admire some

things which look for appreciation in the twentieth century from refined persons. (5) The character that the admirer conceives the artist to have owned. (6) When the sensuous object is a face either depicted or real, the estimate he forms of the owner's character or of that of the portrayed. All of these may, and many other possible ones could be, complete, self-consistent structures of conceptions or perceptions, and yet form a component of that larger structure, the full æsthetic experience.

It is this heterogeneous and complex character of æsthetic experiences that makes it possible to say that Homer's or Dante's or Shakespeare's poems are probably more admirable to-day than ever before. For the procession of sounds and meanings which compose their beauty may be now englobed in a far richer æsthetic experience. They may have with a modern soul more and more concordant relations than with any in the past, in spite of their having lost many associations that conspired to warm admiration for the contemporaries of those poets. Of course you can contest this suggestion; yet, proof being out of the question, even if debatable it remains possible. In this sense as well as in others which I shall discuss later, æsthetic experience may be thought of as living and growing, in brief as being a form of life. A further example of the possible vigour of this growth is desirable. A broken, battered Elgin marble may beget a richer admiration than the complete statue could have done

when Pericles first gazed up at it, while congratulating Phidias. The few items that remain intact seem perfectly accorded, and suggest perfection for those that have been destroyed, which because it is a suggestion and cannot be fully focussed, adapts itself to every cordial mind, just so much more being added to the actual beauty of the fragment as each may think needed. The undamaged pediment was perhaps harsh, over particular, and over emphatic in some ways which the de-polished, discoloured, weather-eaten fragment refuses to admit ; on the other hand it may have been more perfect than the best-prepared modern mind could conceive.

The admired sensuous image acts as the fertilizer, the spermatozoon of ever-renewed æsthetic experiences, causing them to develop and complete their latent possibilities ; and it passes like a germ-plasm from generation to generation, begetting ever new descendants of the experience, as it encounters fresh souls open and fertile to that admiration. The nature of the complete æsthetic experience renders it practically impossible to analyse fully the structure of its admired cause. Our minds always add a complement and interpretation to what they admire ; and this addition is necessarily subjective. A cause of this is that language, the chief instrument of thought, cannot adequately describe the organization of sounds in music and poetry, or of shapes and colours in works of art. We can see this most strikingly when we compare a good copy of picture or drawing with the

original. Apart, we might doubt whether the copy be not the master's work ; the moment they are side by side, we see that an infinity of small proportions and relations have been altered, and that all of these, and every group of them, alter the effect of the main proportions, which may have been measured or traced. The most vital copies are not the most accurate, but substitute something of the copyist's manner and preferences for what is unavoidably lost. Thus Rubens copied Titian. *Æsthetic* mimicry does not aim at deception, but glories in an avowed distance that makes its nearness miraculous. In mechanical reproductions the new and generally widely differing materials create strange unlikenesses, sometimes imparting more unity of effect, while reducing or annihilating in the handiwork the influence of the substances used. This is often the case in photographs, though the even-inking of a lithograph sometimes produces a slight degree of such travesty ; yet lithography is by far the most perfect method of reproduction.

If then copying, mimicry, and the most perfect mechanical processes fail to analyse a composition, words must fail far more obviously. It is hard to say anything particular about a good picture that might not seem equally true of a poor one. No character that can be copied is sufficient. Though poor or school works generally fail in conception and composition most glaringly, when these occasionally are not without excellencies, the relation they hold to the execution will probably



appear, by comparison with a masterpiece, a foregone conclusion. Qualities that can be labelled are in the masterpiece equally essential with those which baffle speech. Beauty is then like life, an arrangement of constituents that still defies the understanding. It is this fact which renders all dogmatic or academic attitudes so ridiculous. A sonnet, perfect according to recipe, may be dull and flat, while many of the most vital notoriously break rules.

## II

Our own shortcomings also must ever necessitate some failure in our efforts to appreciate beauty ; so that to dogmatize on our personal experience, the only one completely open to us, must always be presumptuous, though to avow it and act on it is the only way we can maintain our integrity. In a world silly with fulsome advertising, it is extremely difficult to respect the boundary between an honest independence and a truculent dogmatism—to admit the ever present possibility of error, the need for further experience, and refrain from any attempt to impose our conclusions without disguising our preferences, or neglecting to act on them. Mental sloth or interested and disingenuous bigotry alone construct theories to exclude what others admire or others produce. No genuine liking is bad, for it must always be sounder than simulated taste. Therefore in art as in life an infinite mansuetude can alone preserve us from blind,

unjust, or perverse judgments. An as yet unapproachable nicety of reactions is the only hopeful response to a world of such infinitely varied fact.

Though their effort be always founded on a verbal muddle,<sup>1</sup> though more nonsense is now headed 'psychology' than appears under any other rubric, nevertheless some of those who try to discover a criterion of value in nervous reactions may help us to realize how intimately the psyche and the body are wedded even to the minutest fibre, nay to the contents of the cells that compose it. Psychologists focus attention on the fact that we see, listen and read with our whole bodies. A vivid response to the sensuous appearances created for us by the stimulus of a masterpiece, arouses in us not so much awareness of our actual bodies, as of an ideal human mechanism and character which no doubt is never an exhaustive realization of its own powers. Ghostly nerves tingle in us, supplementing our own. The perfectly controlled range of a voice is heard that for very shame lifts the finger of silence to our poor lips, while bearing, address and humanity stir in our ineffective members, which remain the more still the more perfectly they realize their clumsiness. The receptiveness demanded of us by the masters can never approach adequacy unless this actually takes place.

Psyche dances in us to every poem, to every picture we contemplate admiringly. The perfection of her movements varies of course with

<sup>1</sup> See *Appendix A.*, p. 191. *On the Nature of Value.*

the perfection of those ghostly limbs which inhabit ours, and with the completeness of the self-forgetfulness which makes room for her to animate our consciousness. Often we rise from concert or picture or poem as though we had danced indeed, moist with her divine sweat, with her entranced eyes shining through our own, while thoughts worthy of her cling round us and only slowly and reluctantly withdraw.

In so far as psychological criticism can help us to conceive the very anatomical actuality of this experience, it may help our life in art. But so soon as a grotesque misuse of language rasps and grates, let us close the heavy book and resort to things we can admire.

Modern critics and writers spend a great deal of time in analysing works of art, and their efforts result occasionally in pages of excellent writing. And of course enthusiasm is catching, and a subtle and absorbing disquisition on a work helps powerfully to focus attention on it and so may reveal its beauty to others; yet the degree in which the analysis becomes complementary to the admired structure remains necessarily unascertainable; no one can be sure to what extent they tally,<sup>1</sup> and no form of literature is so liable to lose savour, even when it is still recognized as exceedingly well written, and in itself interesting; to read Reynolds', or even Fromentin's or Baudelaire's criticism, requires a constant effort of reconstruction which sometimes approaches the difficulty of

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 45-47.

deciphering an unknown language, and the result is never more than partially successful.

### III

While this impossibility of finally analysing beautiful objects, that can be viewed as wholes as pictures can, is vividly in mind, let us turn to those works of art the whole effect of which can never be grasped save as a memory. Music obviously consists in a procession of sounds ; the first that contribute to its beauty are no longer audible when the last burst on the ear. Literature as obviously consists of a double procession of sounds and meanings, both occupying precisely the same time. Words cannot compete with music, in which whole regiments of various sounds may march abreast or in a hundred various formations. Words are condemned to single file ; though Villiers de l'Isle Adam wrote a scene in which every one of a large cast spoke simultaneously, he had to take care that it should not matter how little of the major part of it was heard. Meanings also can scarcely appear save one after the other ; at most two or three can be presented by the cunning order of the same words, as in images, allusions,<sup>1</sup> irony or other innuendo.

Men of letters may be divided ; on the one side those who achieve constant felicity with the Indian file of sounds, on the other those who neglect this and whose success consists solely in marshalling their trooping meanings. Yet

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix E.*, p. 200.

it is commonly allowed that those who are eminent in both respects are most perfect. Shakespeare and Keats, Racine and Baudelaire, Rossetti, Yeats and Paul Valéry are pre-eminent for combining beauty of sound with those intellectual and spiritual beauties which arise from the marshalling of meanings. Defoe and Stendhal patently neglect the flute-like attenuation of the music of words. Swinburne and Mallarmé give it disproportionate prominence.

Meanings are of many kinds, and may be sorted. An æsthetical pre-eminence must be accorded to those which evoke visions of beauty ; these need not correspond to any actuality. A subdivision of this class constructs sequences of action and intention, which compose what we call characters. Persons can hardly be real to us unless we occasionally catch glimpses of their bodily appearances. Thus the delineation of character may often form an element in extremely beautiful sensuous evocations, and thus add to these very rare spiritual beauties.

Works in which characters are a chief element may be subdivided according as these are chosen for beauty of sensuous or of spiritual effect, or merely for fidelity to probability.

Next come arrangements of sensuous images for intellectual correspondences and generalizations, when no sensuous visionary whole is called up, but the harmony is created under a dominance of idea, mood or temperament alone. And all kinds of meanings may also be presented either for what they essentially



are, or as means to stir human emotion.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless many other classes might be distinguished. Most kinds and uses of meanings occur frequently in Shakespeare's processions, without it becoming evident that any one is unduly preferred or tends to reappear mechanically. Possibly no other writer shows so little partiality, is so little prone to harp on a single string too long, and is enslaved by mental habit for such brief periods.

Processions of verbal sounds and meanings may be disorderly with many stragglers, or over-drilled and meticulously spick-and-span. Some as they march gather impetus, others loiter or trail. There are that wed ease to vigour, and those that divorce animation from purpose. Immensely various, they attack or entrain or merely file past the reader's attention as he takes down book after book in a library. Practically no work is written that could be praised for every possible excellence. Hence actual writings are wholes formed of a selection of qualities. Those have the best title to be considered as art, in which the music of words is fine and a dominant: next come those that evoke æsthetically effective visions. The vital importance of these is probably greatest when it accompanies characters used to æsthetical and spiritual effect. The last place must be given to mere sequences of thoughts and images composed under a mood. But none of these classes excludes another; and Shakespeare was master of all.

<sup>1</sup> See *Appendix G.*, p. 204.

After these we arrive at works in which the intellect rules and the æsthetic sense is subservient or absent. Such works, though they may be well-built, and well-written, have the adjective 'beauty' applied to them with less propriety, though all of which the constituents are effectively arranged present one true analogy to a beautiful object, even when not in any degree sensuous, for smoothness, orderliness, precision and structural proportion constitute a metaphorical sensuousness.

Since the medium of poetry is language of which the paramount purpose is to convey meanings, this purpose must strictly limit the possibilities of verbal music. Meredith in one way, Mallarmé in another, and Rimbaud in a third, violated the intelligibility of language—which is as inæsthetic as to paint shutters in counterfeit of stained glass in expectation that they will then transmit light like windows. Swinburne in pursuit of verbal music attenuates meaning, till it becomes like spun glass; it remains transparent, though we are forced to look at it rather than through it. Of course the degree to which each admirer receives the full intention of the creator varies enormously. Probably no man's perception is ever identical with another's; and therefore the value of a work of art can never essentially be that of a communication between man and man, since each prizes it for what it is to him, irrespective of what it may have been or may be to another.

The gifted have always worshipped pictures or poems in their youth, which they later discovered not to have had the beauty or significance they had read into them. They gave the author the benefit, not of a doubt, but of a certainty to which he had no claim. It is only as men approach to being man that they agree. The agreement of the herd is in impotence not in power.

Some maintain that the intensity or quality of emotion begotten is the true source of success. This mistake has frequently been exposed. A lucky gambler may very possibly enjoy an exultation such as Shelley or Correggio never touched in realizing their felicities, or when his luck was turned may know an anguish and torment that neither Michael Angelo nor Rembrandt could plumb. The company emotion keeps gives it æsthetic value. Of what a gracious, serene, and lofty world Da Vinci's felicities form a part ! How detrimental and blighting is the gaming-hell founded on brutal disrespect for the product of human effort ! Yet in what other place do intensity and absorption so torture and burn ? Emotion has small value in itself, and only becomes precious when related to worthy experience. There is no distinctively æsthetic emotion, the thrill of pleasure caused by a work of art cannot be distinguished from that due to a flower or sunset save by this difference of source.

To resume : Beauty is as entirely objective as light, though our admiration of it is dependent on the integrity of our faculties, as our

perception of light is on the health of our eyes. The work of art is one with its value, which exists nowhere else, neither in the mind of the artist nor in the objects or scenes he may have evoked. No value can be added or taken from a work of art save by altering its structure or constituents. Herein æsthetic value is totally different from commercial value, which waxes and wanes with situation or other adventitious circumstances. Beauty is a real value just as truth is,<sup>1</sup> and quite unaffected by human error in regard to it. We make mistakes about it, just as we do about all experience ; but the truth about it awaits discovery all the time.

The complete æsthetic experience includes the appearance of the admired object, and adds to it a heterogeneous subjective complement. As nice an organization should be achieved by this as by the work of art itself, but one totally distinct from that, though among its constituents is always the appearance of the admired object.

A work of graphic art can be viewed simultaneously as a whole, one of music or literature only in memory. Midway between these arts of sequence and graphic art, come the plastic arts, architecture, sculpture, carpentry, pottery, which create objects the beauty of which cannot be completely estimated from any station. It is necessary to turn them round or move round them to realize their full beauty, nay, it may be, to

<sup>1</sup> See the *Introduction*, also the *Appendix on the Nature of Value*, p. 191.

open them or enter and wander through them. The man whose current æsthetic admirations are not finely related to those of his own and of humanity's past history, will scarcely develop them far. Æsthetic experience of masterpieces continues through long ages augmenting or dwindling, as men pore over or grow blind to their particular excellencies.



## PIVOTS

The perfection of our response should envelop a masterpiece, as its perfume the rose.

Most of us turn up our noses at art that our admiration could not exhaust with a lifetime of devoted study. Inevitably the cock on the dungheap discards the pearl wristband.

The earliest æsthetic choices known to us are such as the bower-bird's collection of bones or shells or pebbles, or the magpie's thefts : and in music, the songs of birds, the prolonged howling of dogs and other animals, and the dancing of apes and elephants.

To alter a surface with marks pleased, and gave rise to primitive ornament. Cursing, an easy gratification of the desire for power, was confused with the power due to knowledge : by a similar confusion ornament came to be used as a symbol of power, magic.

Though past should help us prize fresh encounters with beauty, to demand that new conform to ancient art is absurd.

No masterpiece sets an aim or is a goal: far more literally, it incites to rivalry. One angel having created the honeysuckle, another retorts with the passion-flower.

Emotion is prized according to the company it keeps.

None but poor poems are trustworthy as records of a poet's experience. The essence of beauty is harmony within the work, not truth to the life which begat it.

Analysis resolves a work of art into abstractions ; these fuse with a totally different concreteness in a critique. Hence, even the most beautiful dissertations on and descriptions of works of art, are always essentially independent creations.

The patterns of music and poetry are in time, those of graphic art on a plane, those of sculpture and architecture in solidity.

Even if the words of Hamlet become as pregnant in us as they were for Shakespeare, Psyche may probably notice that we ask her to dance on a less generously waxed floor, or have grown less redolent flowers outside the open window than he did.

The steps of poets are extremely various. The sound of their going is as important as its rapidity, grace and sureness, or the distances traversed, or the haven reached. But a lover must listen before their value can be estimated.

Though the armour contrived by Pallas so fitted that Aphrodite could breathe, nay dance in it, yet she must always put it off to smile irresistibly.

## CREATOR AND CREATION

I

Some may be surprised that I have carried my enquiry so far without turning to the relation which the work of art holds to the artist. This is often supposed to be the most important, the most fundamental it can have. Does he not express himself in it—put into it all his originality? Is there not in his mind a mysterious chamber, absent in other minds, of which inspiration keeps the key? A well-head of intuitions at least? Do not riches lie there, as in the treasuries of Solomon?—nay, why not complete masterpieces ready to leap full-grown Athenas from the forehead of Zeus?—at least wonderful thoughts that have not yet occurred to him, inexhaustible emotions, moods, passions, never yet undergone? Something like this is surely an ever-reiterated implication. But can it be seriously faced? We no longer dream that it fits the truth more closely than a fairy story. We are convinced that genius draws everything from outside, from experience. Shut it up from infancy in a dungeon, and it will never develop; among a savage tribe, it could never become Michael Angelo; and the Renaissance did not produce medicine-men and painted chiefs, though knaves and rulers of urbane accomplishment flourished in it. There is within us then no hidden palace of Eros, where a kidnapped beauty, rival to that of the gods, is visited and enjoyed. Even the subconscious has been furnished by the well-known firm,

Messrs. Misconstruction and Too-soon. Experience begets on ignorance the children of thought who live, those still-born, and the weakly ones that waste away. If there is a spark divine, it consists in a greater energy and impulse for putting one and two together—a less weariable, because by good fortune a more frequently rewarded patience. Each timely lucky encounter opens possibilities for many more ; and if their timeliness depends on the foregone development of the energy within, the luck depends entirely on circumstances. Every great genius has come into a great fortune of one kind or another, however adverse his circumstances as the world judges ; they must have been at some point exceptionally propitious. And if there is about a genius something odd or inhuman, that will be due, as in the case of criminals, to stunting misfortunes, maiming impediments, untimely frustrations, resulting in limitations, inabilities, bad habits, in his case strangely assorted with successfully fostered aptitudes, felicitously timed discoveries, never baffled experiments. And heredity ? Well, at most that means that the accumulation of misfortune or of luck has continued through two, three, four generations ; or it may merely mean that a genius or an idiot is none the less a man, not a monkey, a crocodile or an angel.

## II

The relation between the parts of a work of art which constitute it a whole, the relation be-

tween the work and its admirer, hold good for other beautiful wholes—landscapes, living creatures, human faces ; and this relation to the artist merely distinguishes a single class, and therefore should yield precedence to those more universal, more fundamental ones.

Though it may be suggested that the elegance of a swallow's form is the creation of its spirit, we cannot let that pass without controversy, without satisfying response to the queries : In what does the spirit of a swallow consist ? Was not the human form in the same sense created by man's spirit ? Why should not those forms as they evolved have gradually created those spirits ? Why should they not have given character to the age-long, the pertinacious thrust of life—life which no analysis has yet succeeded in either resolving or recomposing ? This unexplained power, this miracle, in a sense certainly seems to have created both man and all his works, as well as swallows and their nests ; but in every case the materials and the occasions for their use were presented by circumstance and apparently at haphazard. Are the most individual spirits anything but a selection from the characteristics of a multitude of lives which preceded theirs and are recomposed in them ? We can define spirit, then, as that power by which one agent influences others in excess of the natural effect of his physical acts or direct intentions. Only in the finest authors do we read pages which influence far more powerfully than their strict meaning could. Rarely does the way someone behaves trans-



form those who witness out of all proportion to the importance of the thing done. So to be as to charm others to wait and work as life and hope deserve, may possibly describe divinity; for such an ideal can only be approached, never fully attained. Spiritual influence appears to grow in proportion to the integrity of the organism from which it radiates; thus a swift appears built for rapid flight, almost wholly for that. Delight and wonder are the effect of its influence, though some eyes may be blind to it. Similarly some persons seem so perfectly what they are, as to cast a spell over fault-finding, even when what they are is nothing rare apart from the completeness of their absorption in it. They are humble folk with no outstanding gifts, so through and through of one quality, that we delight in them and wonder at them. Even the wicked, the Iagos, may win some of this admiration by whole-heartedness in evil. This integrity should perhaps be called reality as opposed to what is only half-distinct, ill-conceived, and self-destructive.

Artists are obviously flattered when everything is referred by obsequious admirers to their spiritual fiat; but off their guard they not infrequently use a language which seems to contradict this assumption. They speak of a composition, as 'not being found yet.' They say: 'Devil take the thing! I can't get it right. I have tried it in every possible way, and yet it is out'; as though the beauty of a work of art were something to which they had to make it conform. They even tell you

that they have had reluctantly to renounce important intentions in order to make the thing hold together. They will disparage clever popular work as embodying quite a raw idea of which the possibilities had never been explored by the artist. They will sum up the perfections of a masterpiece by saying : ' Then it is fortunate throughout, a supreme example of good luck having occurred at a golden moment in history coincident with a golden moment in the master's life, when the world and his development conspired together to bless his work.'

However spiritual some works of art may seem, the man who made them lived in our universe and by valuing it accumulated that spirit which his works exert. The source of value was always *there* rather than *here*; outside and not within : or if it were also within, still the more abundant fount was abroad.

An artist is obviously a creator, the maker of a new object ; but his work's beauty is a discovery—a solved puzzle of which the complete and necessary arrangement of parts has at last been lighted on. If the notion that man was created out of clay in an oriental garden appears crude and popular, so does any account of the genesis of works of art which ignores that they have been evolved out of the potentialities of their elements and in strict subservience to limitations set by these.

' Nothing comes of nothing.' To dismiss works of art as derivative, as it is so fashion-

able to do, is to make the most ignorant remark possible ; all art, all poetry being obviously derivative. The early work of every master might always have been damned as linking too closely with some pre-existent work, and his later work as issuing from his earlier. There is a sense in which every work of art is the actual representative flower or fruit of an age-long process of evolution, often bridging epoch to epoch. Early stone temples, Hindoo or Greek, were copies of preceding wooden ones : the earliest Egyptian stone jars imitate the baskets they replaced, being meant for the far-future use of the dead, while esparto served the living. They exemplify how most suitably, even exquisitely, the hardest stones could serve this strange purpose : though from the point of view of the craftsman, making a free choice as to what purpose he shall put his material to, this use might seem the most illogical, the least desirable, and, he might be inclined to add, the most obviously inæsthetic.

Yet he could not do this ; the objects themselves would silence him, unless his sense of beauty were enslaved by his reasoning faculty ; they are so beautiful, so inevitable ! The opportunity to create them depended entirely on the absolute tyranny of certain superstitions, which represented for that age the altogether reasonable reverence that every unpervverted mind feels for the past, and its complementary avidity and anxiety in reaching forward to the future. So, too, the Byzantine mosaics clumsily imitate with little

polygons of stone, draperies and features painted by their forerunners with a flowing brush ; they did not invent new forms, but, guided by the inability of their material to do better than caricature the models they had in view, discovered novel effects that rewarded their most unlikely enterprise with a success that they could not have foreseen.

Reason cannot create such opportunities, but it perceives that, in a profound sense, they testify to a worthiness in life which may very possibly actually belong to it and by which the best minds are the most influenced.

### III

The lyricist has often either no idea of what his final verse will be or only the vaguest. One word suggests another, thought hurries to thought. He may feel confident he can end effectively, because he has done so a great many times. He leaps into the dark and the risk of doing so helps to excite him. He enchants himself by landing on his feet, as he will later enchant his reader. Often he falls, no doubt, but nobody is by ; and he can not only pick himself up but often conjure his failure into success—a find that in no other way could have been suggested. At times he may even have to use the first line which occurred as the last, and open with that which once ended, in order to achieve the utmost felicity. A poetic organism takes shape like any other embryo, it feeds and grows. The best poets, like the best mothers, regard their

offspring as no part or parcel of themselves, but as a separate entity which they can help, but which has an inherent right to develop on its own lines. They are intensely interested, often anxious, but they deny themselves; for entrusted to them, its freedom must be sacred.

An idea for a long poem arrives; the recipient broods over it for weeks, months, or years; subsidiary notions flock around; their suggestions are often rejected, yet as often he is inclined to suppress developments which refuse to be torn away. While a poem is yet in this state, a wise poet will reject all suggestions of rhythm or phrasing. He knows they would crystallize his fruit before it is ripe, before he has lived with it long enough. This holding back is one of the most important factors in the felicitous production of structures of any extent. Of course all need not take place in the mind; schemes and plans and notes may be written; but woe betide, if felicitous verses appear before the fundamental beauties of his theme stand round him like mountains of necessity. At last the poem wills to be written; then all the processes that helped it in the mind, help to cover, score and blot the paper; as Emerson said: "The writer is like a skater; he must go partly where he will and partly where the skates carry him." When an author will go only where he wants to, he says goodbye to all felicities of language, which depend on his obedience to the suggestions of words. A poem grows up under the poet's care and



guidance, but is as essentially surprising to him as to any one else, far more so as a rule, since he is most attentive, most pleased at its luck, most anxious over its difficulties.

Having looked at this picture, look at this.

Though a stone be itself, nevertheless the most wonderful thing about you is that you are *you*, and not that you are so much a man as to be almost a poet. Your value is merely to be yourself. Whatever in you is uncommon, underived, novel, unexpected, that you must discover, for that will be your art. Do not cook your thoughts ; let them issue spontaneously. Rejoice in them the more they differ from everyone else's. No matter how silly ! Reason is not unique like madness. Therefore be mad.

Those who sincerely follow this fashionable advice, head up the stream of life towards ever cruder and less developed forms of thought and taste ; and if they were thorough would end by finding a dot, an id, whose only property was to be one, distinct in a multitude exactly similar.—But Blake and Van Gogh behaved so.—That you are a man or a woman whom it has taken centuries to make at all reasonable is all your value, as it was theirs. Blake is at his best where he is least eccentric, where he speaks to all gentle souls ; not when it takes years of scholarship to find out that what he meant might have been clearly stated in more appropriate words. Van Gogh is no good save when you would not know from the picture that he had been mad.

#### IV

The value of a work of art, far from consisting in the information it conveys as to how a certain individual saw things and gave precedence to this or to that by a freak of attention, consists actually in its not being able to convey this. At times circumstances prohibit such freedom: at others he is so docile to his materials, to the thought of men in general, and to his own innermost oneness with them, that he can only speak what all would say and to the fullest his medium allows. Homer and Shakespeare have this fulness and universality.

No, words have betrayed me ! The value of a work of art never consists in inability to reveal the caprices of an individual's attention: but opportunities to assort words, to modulate rhythms, to arrange the proportions and sequence of passages so that they may tell universally, only occur when, the writer's temper having been supplanted to a well-nigh uncircumscribed docility, the abundance of actual possibilities is disclosed. The artist is obviously not the source of value, his reverence for the material in which he is generating forms being a *sine quâ non* of his opportunity. The ideas imposed on him by his position in history are also perforce humbly accepted; while those emotions which belong to him in common with his kind are respected as inevitable, and may not be avoided save by a reasonless petulance. He is the altogether tame servant of his conditions in these three ways; his freedom consists in perfect obedi-

ence ; this alone allows him to shape forms of universal import.

If he were only superficially influenced by his predecessors, if he had never worshipped and studied them passionately, he must needs have remained shallow and capricious either in conforming to or in departing from tradition. If he had achieved only a slight acquaintance with the resources and limitations of the materials he employed, he could never have become a master. If the moods and ideas which controlled his choices were not essential to man's permanence, his success would not have travelled far into the future. No man can ever seem so inexhaustibly original as when he is unfathomably teachable.

## V

Imagine a workshop lined with shelves, pigeon-holes and drawers, all crowded with the jumbled parts of watches and clocks, cog-wheels, ratchets, hair-springs, main-springs, pivots, spindles, screws in every confusion of size and provenance. Picture a skilful clock-maker sorting them till at last he can fit together a clock and then a watch, till he has here one, there another steadily ticking. Such is the creative artist ; only his shop is infinitely more abundant and confused, and could rival that garden of Eden in which the first creator put together so many diverse types of plant and animal, and at last mankind. Instead of clocks that tick and strike, instead of animals that breathe, prowl, feed

and breed, the artist sorts out parts and properties for objects that win rapture and lasting friendship from other men ; though, if the quality of his work be fine, oftenest from that mere handful who escape deformation by superficial fashions or worldly interest or hostile conditions. For life in works of fine art has more enemies, more diseases, and is subject to more accidents and hindrances than in any other organism except perhaps the soul. To suppose that vital success ever has been common is a lunacy, although some periods and some masters may have a larger amount to their credit.

Have we not always at bottom conceived of the relation of an artist to his work as implying that the more patient his docility the more perfect his success ? The more he learns from things he handles, things he sees, things he hears and overhears, the more chance he has of divining which of these will work with which of those, what quantities, what sizes, what shapes, what qualities will co-operate till they throb together with a life of their own. He must never, we know, pretend that a work lives when it has only heaved a lethargic mass, or cracks and groans at every attempt at movement. However great the cost he has been put to, he must wait till its regular pulse chimes with his own and with all those that quicken at beauty.

## VI

That so-called " significant form " which is

the most insignificant everywhere save in a suppositionary world, the existence of which can only be vouched for by a young man obviously more eager to raise a laugh than to discover truth, is only an extreme instance, a caricature of the common reference of works of art to more perfect archetypes, as though they were copies of something in the artist's mind, or in another world as Blake thought. This is realism applied to the ideal, exact verisimilitude reporting things neither seen nor heard nor touched on earth. But is not this perfect original of painting or sculpture that bloomed in the master's mind, and which he only imperfectly succeeded in transferring to a material medium, a dream of ignorance, or else the self-delusion of one too ecstatic, too impatient to ask himself whether he really means what he says or something else? Is it not a form of the vulgar conception of a poet's mind as full of wordless thoughts that need only squeezing out like pigment from a tube to dry into verbal beauty? Whereas in a very real sense a poet only grasps his poem when he reads a fair copy; till then it was for him like the statuette the excavator has found caked with scoriæ and clinging coats of deposit, which must be removed before its beauty can be a sure possession. He knows that it is there, he guesses that it is beautiful; but what exactly it is, and how beautiful, he cannot yet feel sure. So the seedling the gardener stoops over, sprinkles a few drops of water round or removes an insect from, has a different leaf and is in all ways totally unlike



the plant that gives it value in his eyes, and into which he foresees that it will grow.

The poet should often be conceived as stimulated by a theme to divine the possibility of an effective attack on it ; its possible progression will long hover before him, unless he is content to use rhythms, colour, atmosphere with which he is perfectly familiar from having used them before, in which case he repeats his old effects. But no, he is more cautious, and plays with phrases, muses on and turns over key words, until a rhythm begins to run in his head which has some special suitability of movement with his conception of the mood his theme suggests ; then perhaps he writes a passage or a few stanzas, then pauses to gather together all the special information his theme comports ; or perhaps he had already done this in prevision that poems must be fed. At last all is ready, the hour is propitious, and he writes a rough draft ; and so at length can see, criticize and correct its main proportions, and distribute emphasis, till he win a second heat of inspiration,—often adding the finest passages, which could, before the poem had been roughed, have been conceived by no one, though it were Shakespeare or Milton, because the opportunity only occurred after that draft had been reviewed, and implied the occurrence of definite blunders in it of which advantage could be taken.

The time actually devoted to these processes of creation may, of course, be of almost any

brevity. Elements collected sub-consciously will at times flow together with lightning rapidity: at other times far more is conscious, and hours, days or weeks may be required. Perhaps both sudden flash and protracted watchfulness contribute to the finest work. Felicities that came unsought, and others patiently tracked month after month, mingle in Milton's poetry.

The colour and painting of Titian or Veronese found their opportunity in the brocade-clad and porticoed world, which their youth had learnt to triumph over the textures and perspectives of. And Michael Angelo's masterpieces imply a foregoing interest and delight in the study of anatomy, and would have lacked opportunity had that not preceded. And if there are artists and poets, like the blind Milton, who carry their work to a high state of completion in their heads, without resort to the drafts and sketches by which others prelude their triumphs, the process is the same; in their strict meditations, they assemble and choose, correct and re-dispose, as others do from sketch to sketch, relying on a splendid intimacy with every possibility of the medium to be employed never to attempt an impossible or overlook a possible beauty. Those whose work is improvised without either of these preparations, probably never produce any but superficial work, or else such as retains all the imperfections of a rough draft (as Christopher Smart's 'Song to David' does) or remains, like Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' or Browning's 'Artemis Prologizes,'

a fragment, a sample of stuff from which great poems might have been made.

## VII

If this is a true though summary account of the processes of creation, how blind are those critics who refer always to the artist as the unique source of value! What is this self which they suppose him to express, that was born in him, distinct and unmistakable from the first, that he cannot fail to impress on the slightest scrawl or scribble? Artists like men win free from the habitual drag, shake off the hooding cloud. Are they less or more than themselves when their handiwork suddenly seems too vital to be genuine? Can personality mean more or other than the fence which hems the man in, or prevents him roaming east as freely as he may west, and forbids even the great genius from following the triumphant spirit of man so far as his gaze can? Every artist contracts defects and mannerisms which betray his identity—sign what he had rather not have signed, and, like the criminal's thumb-mark, help the expert to track him. Genuineness is not excellence. As the bones of a saint may be worshipped by those who never spend a thought on his deeds, so genuine failures are often purchased by men who simply cannot see the beauty created by that same hand which betrayed its weakness in their treasure. Not intensity and fineness of conception, not grandeur of composition, not elegance of proportions, but the

fact that each touch has ended in a little blob, too often settles the price, and the position on the walls of the public collection. The fatal genuineness of a sorry period's work may thus outface the master's achievement to the end of time.

And in literature, would expertise ever allow that Shakespeare might deliberately return to an earlier manner in a given passage or scene as more suitable to the effect he desired? Why should every change of manner or mood follow a supposed change in his circumstances? Is any living poet so crucified on his poor life? Must he be drowned in woe before he can write a tragedy, have grown embittered before he can crack the lash of satire? Must he doggedly plod on one straight line of successive moods which servilely follow his fortunes? Not a bit of it: we know the soul reacts to happiness and youth by a delight in the tragic and lurid, that men bear up and dare to issue more cheerful and serene from under the pressure of misfortune and remorse. Why then should Shakespeare have lived and written as though he were the least imaginative of his commentators? Must every phase of the relations between this most playful of poets and his muse be recoverable by a detective, or predictable by men who could no more construct a play or write felicitous verse than they could fly? Yet admit all this and what becomes of the expert's science? Like history it grows nebulous. The facts are so few, demand so large a complement of interpretation, that

every generation with a fresh outlook must perforce expound them differently, and the imaginative see clearly that no exposition can ever tally with irrecoverable fact.

If, when Fletcher set the fashion, and wrote romantic plays, Shakespeare followed his lead, however disdainfully, as not caring to reascend those tragic summits up which he had toiled before, with whatever increase in nonchalance, and decrease in concentration—why, if you imagine all this, should you not imagine that he imitated Fletcher's verse with its double-endings, as the source of an intriguing novelty of effect? Are not Fletcher's best tirades precisely those that appear under Shakespeare's name? This most patently-born of verbal mimics, this unequalled parodist who could hide his own serious thought in the suit of another's oddities, as his character-drawing proves, can this butterfly not escape the scholar's painfully-woven net? Has he not perhaps mocked Marlowe to the life, mocked him as only one whose admiration was all but worship could? And why not Chapman too? for he was in brief passages worthy of his imitation. True, the supposition of a greater mobility than that of the caterpillar is most inconvenient from the point of view of the expert's job! So is the supposition of a larger soul than that of the puritan inconvenient for those who would like to be sure that Shakespeare thought his Henry V a cad. This kind of summary and invidious labelling of human beings probably had no interest for one who saw them in all their manifold and contradic-



tory fullness. Contemplating in his popular king a born leader of men, an adventurer, a scapegrace, and much else besides, may have deprived him of any eagerness to affix a label greasy from the thumbs of those whose obtuseness is content to divide humanity into two, 'gentlemen' and 'cads.'

## VIII

No, we only admire artists because of the beauty of their work. Some are interesting as men, as thieves and rogues may be ; some are uninteresting as experts and scientists by a stray chance may have been. This literary tittle-tattle about persons is not critical, only human and weak. The man may be negligible ; that does not detract from his work ; or he may be a dazzling creature and produce nothing that is not meretricious. The source of art-value is beauty, however it came to be where it is, whoever created it. Forgers have been considerable artists, and can claim Michael Angelo as their prince and fellow, though the authority, when at last he detects them, relegate their beautiful works to the cellar from the chief position in the gallery which he had first allotted and which they still deserve. Genuineness is not the equivalent of beauty. Nothing is more genuine than dullness, nothing less beautiful.

However, it is always important not to prove too much. The artist, as distinct from the man, has personality—cannot be defined merely by fault and limitation. His best work

owns step, bearing, and grasp of its own, being here puissant, there delicate, with an incidence such as occurs for no other master. But much the man has signed may lack this character or be weak in it. His name might stand for the coherent nucleus conveniently enough. Beware, lest we be soon tempted to group under it traits common to both this kernel and the worthless shucks and so varnish with respect efforts that had far better be banished from all contingency with the veritable creator. Thus a mountain merges with an amorphous cloud and its admirable shape is forgotten. Will not the relation of artist to work, understood on these lines, cover more facts? The Chinese and Japanese artists, who change their styles to suit their themes, and often use several deliberately differentiated manners, find here as easy a place as those of the Renaissance or primitive masters or the anonymous Byzantine worker in mosaic. The craftsmen, who copy their predecessors doggedly from generation to generation and never dare, now and then touch such exquisiteness in the refinement of stale themes and foregone conclusions as puts to shame the bravest of lonely geniuses. Of course some potential lonely genius may often have been a craftsman, whom circumstances refused to frame or set off among the crowd. All kinds of plastic effort have fairly equal chances of producing a work of supreme beauty. Yet the class from which each is taken, the school or the period, are mere background or not even that—waste, —spoiled or unused material. Out from all

classes some eminences tower over work of average or poor level. The idol of the savage that is exquisitely carved or powerfully conceived may take due rank, sometimes a high one. Whereas theories, because exceptions cannot illustrate them, are always liable to disparage the morning or the evening star ; for heralds, like those who hark back to foregone modes, are always singular at the moment. Impressionism excludes more than half the world's art ; expressionism supposes that admiration is given not to the resultant object, but to the intuitions divined behind it, which prompted its creation. Realism is left gaping at St. Sophia or at a Korin screen without a single appropriate remark, while ' the authority ' disparages to-day what he honoured yesterday on strictly scientific grounds. Not that any of these lines of thought has proved barren ; they have all focussed attention on some characteristics which had been neglected ; only none of them by itself is adequate, or even essential to a full enjoyment of beauty.

## PIVOTS

Nothing is what it is alone.

The mind presumes that it can isolate things in thought ; yet we have no experience of any thing or any thought unsurrounded or uninfluenced.

We forget how impossible it is to imagine a man doing anything without the favour or connivance of the universe.

The more excellently well done work is, the more this favour seems to have abounded, and the greater we judge its human collaborator to have been.

Shakespeare's indebtedness to the circumambient collaboration was probably deeper and more varied than that of any other poet.

Great value supposes an agent enveloped in an unusually stimulating atmosphere.

Personality probably depends on limitation.

The process of creation begins with accumulations : so a bird builds a nest, or feeds its young. This preparation may in the artist often be unconscious. At length, a series of efforts are made to use or prove this store ; some fail and are repeated, some succeed : so the swallow pushes her nestling over into the air, so the young thrush hops and flaps its wings : so boys were tumbled into water to

teach them to swim, so they throw stones till they can aim straight: so too the young artist flounders in paint, the young poet scribbles rhymes.

When the work of art satisfies the artist, it does not fulfil prevision but at last seems complete. Hitherto improvement or correction had always been suggested.

A work of art is not the mechanical product of the artist's capacities and environment. These more often tempt him to pretend satisfaction before he feels it.

The creative impulse emerges unimaginably, like life itself: and as health approves that, so an harmonious integrity approves art.

There is the lucky flash, but also the patient pursuit, and the resultant satisfaction enlarges the personality.

In what do the spirits of eagle or of man consist, if it be not in power to influence other spirits? A soul's present activity also influences its future adequacy, or the spirit which it is destined to exert.

As the artist attains to his full integrity by growth which demands ever new self-repression, so does a work of art by growing suggest its own castigation.

The fundamental vital perception is that good



things that are not or that we have not, can and do bring to naught bad things from which we suffer. Every hungry creature acts on this persuasion, and spurred by the absence of food hunts up something eatable.

A thriving spirit is far hungrier than a healthy body.

Taste must enjoy, it need not understand, so must Aphrodite far rather strip than arm.

## CRITICISM AND CREATION

Freedom promises us activity aimed straight at the ends of desire, no longer balked or sent about by contingencies. Small wonder if the heart loves the word. Some modern philosophers teach that freedom exists in art. Artists and poets assent, if they assent, much less confidently. How can they aim straight to their goal? They have to collect materials and learn to employ each with respect for its inherent limitations. The power to write *King Lear* comes to the poet whose observation, reflection, command over language, and opportunities are sufficient: the desire to write a great tragedy mocks the tyro and amateur. Was not Blake as over-hasty as Trotsky? Did he not fly with singed wings, like a moth that escapes through the window after having made headlong for a star that proved less ideal than it looked? An artist wishes that when discussing æsthetics, philosophers would argue with examples rather than phrases. A phrase may raise a legion of devils, each in a different brain, and create pandemonium. Bertrand Russell writes beautifully:—"Indignation is a submission of our thoughts, but not of our desires; the Stoic freedom in which wisdom consists is found in the submission of our desires but not of our thoughts. From the submission of our desires springs the virtue of resignation; from the freedom of our thoughts springs the whole world of art and philosophy, and the vision of beauty by which at last we half reconquer the reluctant world."

But in what sense are our thoughts free when our desires are resigned? Policemen can march us off, they cannot arrest our thoughts. Yet if we are prevented from acting, the opportunity for those thoughts which would have resulted from our actions is taken from us. Doing precedes thinking, and notion must be tested by deed. Even abstract ideas require such counter-proof. Einstein must be confirmed by astronomical observations from the Austral seas. Æsthetic thought lives by intimate association with plastic activity, and can never divorce the hand, without deformation and atrophy. If we renounce painting a picture because the requisite management of canvas, brushes and pigments, is too hard of achievement, can thought compare our picture with our thoughts of what it should be, so as to correct either it or them? Thought alone cannot even shape a theme into a poem: the ear must toy with the sound of words, ere the visionary lid be lifted and we view what never was on land or sea. The process is progressive: chosen words give opportunity for further choices: the vision they suggest completes itself as other meanings and phrases loom into sight. That phrase 'the freedom of our thoughts' seems decidedly too easy. Aristotle wrote a poem before launching out on his poetics; a preparation to be commended to other philosophers, and with a further suggestion that the value of the treatise ought to depend on that of the poem, or why write it? 'The mountain nymph,

sweet Liberty ' climbs from rock to cloud, and is extremely hard to come up with.

Turgot wrote to Dr. Price :—

" How comes it that you, well nigh first among English men of letters have put forward just notions about liberty, and exposed the fallacy re-hashed by nearly all republican writers ' that freedom consists in subjection to the laws alone,' this would not even be true were we to suppose all laws enacted by the assembled nation. For, of course the individual has also rights, that can only be taken from him by violence and an illegitimate use of the collective power."

Thus we see that the ' sweet nymph ' may escape through the multitudinous hands of democracy as virginal as she has come from all other attempts to frame just laws for nations or for arts. Common consent cannot be accepted as their equivalent, any more than the goodwill of an individual, of a class, of an interest, of a fashion or of a clique.

A voice from America announces, not indeed that just laws have been found for art, but that no laws are required ; and it does the heart good to learn that " we have done with all the old rules "—" with the *genres* or literary kinds "—" with the theory of style "—" with all moral judgment of literature "—" with the confusion between drama and theatre," for " the success may justify the playwright " said an old French critic, " but it may not be so easy

to justify the success." "We have done with technique as separate from art"—"with the history and criticism of poetic themes"—"with the race, time, and environment of the poet as an element of criticism"—"with the evolution of literature"—"and finally with the old rupture between genius and taste."

And a good riddance too, we feel. Yes, criticism—because its ideal is just thoughts about art, instead of an independent creation resulting from the critics' contact with the work criticized—criticism has always clogged itself with conclusions which had proved illuminating in regard to given masterpieces, but had no such power applied to new creations. Yet that just laws are unknown does not prove that none will ever be found. Undiscovered worlds beyond worlds may exist in thought as well as in space.

The value of reading such books as this American's is that they carry us over the old ground with a headstrong companion who is amusing, because he holds an electric torch, and the narrow field of its illumination brings objects up out of the darkness so suddenly, so queerly. However much we resist, we are refreshed. But another, a more weighty, American æsthetician has noted that "The habit of regarding the past as effete and as merely a stepping-stone to something present or future, is unfavourable to any true apprehension of that element in the past which was vital and remains eternal." The cogency of this reflection should make us very careful



to examine the credentials of this new freedom. Our guide says little about them, being engrossed in decrying the old sign-posts, and inviting us to try his short cut to Arcady. However, he refers us to his "friend Benedetto Croce, the most original of all modern thinkers of Art," to whom Mr. Douglas Ainslie has before introduced us. Signor Croce makes, like his pupil, numbers of statements which take this form :

"Art is intuition, and intuition is individuality." "The result of a work of art is intuition." "Intuition is expression." "Pure intuition is itself lyricism." "A landscape is a state of the soul." "A great poem may be all contained in an exclamation of joy."

And yet no one of these terms is converted into the second, no one is dropped by the philosopher, though if they are synonymous one must be otiose. Surely nothing is more certain than that one thing cannot be another, one meaning another meaning. Croce needs to learn what the little bird taught Francis Jammes,

"Qu'une chose est cela qui n'est pas autre chose."

Hope stirs therefore that mankind, the creator of languages, may prove wiser than this egregious doctor, since he conforms in practice to the common conclusion that intuition is not a synonym for expression. Surely the goddess of human speech has been revenged on this Italian and helped him to confute himself. The fundamental and typical point may perhaps be illustrated without too much

machinery. Let us 'put case' as Browning used to say.—Nobody had seen how it happened, apparently only the child could have done it; the mother suddenly has an intuition that James's coat, as he passed round the table, might have brushed those long tufts just sufficiently to overbalance the vase not yet weighted with water, and that her child told the truth when it denied touching the flowers. Though that intuition was borne in on the mother just as a line of verse may be on a poet, or the hang of a scene on a dramatist, coming without degrees 'in a flash' as she said, was it a work of art? Was it even an expression? for she stammered and got it out with difficulty, so that its expression had just the opposite character to the intuition. Then, too, she never grasped its soundness until she found it granted by the others; she had 'tried it on' speculatively, blindly, even as the artist may only grasp the felicity and soundness of his intuitions when he sees the finished work. What was the true character of this intuition? Was it not an intimation, so incipient as to resemble our consciousness of some fact we cannot recall and yet feel to be coming back, saying with sometimes justified confidence 'Wait a bit'? Far better talk about 'henids,' as Otto Weininger suggested naming these stirrings in the mind which move us before they are recognizable, than assert intuition, which means something borne in on the mind, to be the same as expression, which means something uttered or shaped by the body;

such usage is inexcusably tactless and confusing. We all suppose that speech and action more or less express ideas, but in doing so change their form; and change of form implies here as always change of content. Even if the vision deliberately conjured up be by poetic licence called an expression, as compared with the intuitive flash, this also alters every time it is revisualized, growing or dwindling as the attention gives it life or withdraws interest from it. The artist imagines first, afterwards recalls and portrays; but the drawing is quite distinct from any image in his mind. The value of the work of art is never that it is faithful to a mental picture, but always that it is able to move us. The intuitions that preceded it were dissimilar and inferior to it; for its success consists in surpassing them, as the finished work should surpass sketches and studies. Art shapes matter. The fingers teach, the mind learns and then, reversing the process, prompts them in its turn: and this interplay continues till the masterpiece is, what no vision that preceded it was, perfectly consonant with the materials of which it is made. The child itches to pull a flower to pieces, to pinch soft clay, to scribble with a stick dipped in milk. At last some scrawl suggests a head, a second eye is added to make the likeness clear. Caricature, the itch to guy likeness by adding an impossibly long nose to the graffito of a face, is the simplest form of invention—of change to delight the mind, grafted on the effort to represent or portray.

Croce tries to exclude the possibilities of vision, pretending that those who cannot represent never see one; but what mother doubts that her child has seen and vividly remembers more than it can describe, both of the real and of the dream world? Every artist sees and loves aspects that he has no means of representing, but he finds these more apt to fade from memory than those he knows how to employ in his work. The perception of beauty is also quite distinct from its creation. A posy of flowers may be a work of art; and though their accidental grouping may be equally beautiful, yet the mere recognition of this would not create a work of art. All these facts that undermine his primary propositions were probably ignored, merely because the philosopher had not had sufficient actual experience of creation.

"Genius is taste," we are told; "criticism is to taste what creation is to genius, therefore criticism is creation, and the critic is the artist." Nothing ever seemed simpler: but language, which is wiser than most of us, distinguishes all these things that the doctrine would confound. We expect and get from Flaubert's novels something on a different plane and of a different nature than from even Jules Lemaître's essays. Anatole France, praising this critic, wrote:—"Le bon critique est celui qui raconte les aventures de son âme au milieu des chefs-d'œuvre." Would that were all he had to do! But the critical impulse seeks just thoughts, and is not content with any that occur in the vagaries of a mind,

and forces the critic to reject more than he accepts. Fortunately numbers are rejected instinctively and leave no recollection that they ever presented themselves, though Professor Freud insists that in dreams they avenge themselves for this short shrift. Anatole France may laugh "*La vérité est qu'on ne sort jamais de soi-même*";—the truth equally is that you may spend a lifetime in searching before you find any recognizable self at home. Of course, that the critical and creative efforts overlap and are sometimes indissoluble, has been clearly established since Goethe's time: but our American implies that criticism should not aim at correcting opinion, which amounts to talking about something else—yet he himself is all the time bent on converting his readers to his own views.

Now critics, however unconsciously, often borrow their novelties from artists. Impressionism was invented by artists like Manet, the Goncourts and Whistler; then by degrees the critics, Jules Lemaître, etc., adopted it, and lastly Croce philosophized it. Now the artists had stolen the idea from science, which was enjoying a boom which they were eager to share in. Science is a record of experience. So the claim was proffered that art in its essence was also a record of experience, and that its value depended on its truth to something else—that it was in fact a copy or abstract, not a creation. But the creative impulse is, as we have seen, highly intuitive, and the artist may only recognize what the impulse desired when that thing is made;



also the thing made may be wholly dissimilar to the vague desire and yet be preferred to it. So this claim was fallacious, as the motive for it was vain. Neither fidelity to the outward world (realism), nor fidelity to an impression, is the *sine quâ non* of art : but integrity within the work, coherence, harmony like the unity of living organisms. Yes, art shapes matter and is not the most rudimentary form of knowledge, but as distinct from intuition as the mollusc's shell is from the animal that made it. And as the same shell may domicile first a whelk, then a crab, a series of minds may sojourn in the one work of art ; nay, even change and improve its shape, as in oral poetry many minds have contributed to the final form, or as a whole race moulds a language. Signor Croce, though he still confuses art with knowledge, has refined impressionism and rendered it more self-consistent ; for him the thing shaped is no copy, but is the shaping force ; so, too, he holds that will is action, and soul body. But will is felt as distinct from action when it is frustrate, and the living body from the dead soul in a soldier who has become imbecile ; so behind many art-failures a creative energy is divined, as foreign to them as a lion to a cage.

It may be necessary that genius fail, and the holiest be martyred. Possibly there is only room for the architecture of heaven where nothing else is. To know God may be to ignore the world. To act as though one were an angel, newly alighted on this earth,

may mean the destruction of all neighbouring persons and things. But artists and saints compromise—remove this, re-mould that, and approach perfection by delicate degrees. Though like Schiller they may feel 'that a mind sublime puts greatness into life yet seeks it not therein,' possibly they have not brought sufficient material with them to re-make the world, so chasten and adapt what lies to hand. Immensities of possibility surround us; we peer out at them, but the night is just too thick for even large stars to be seen clearly. Language rightly becomes mystical when it launches over the unmeasured, and so to launch has from time immemorial delighted the spirit of man, renewed his strength and enlivened his wits. The dry land of knowledge increases pebble by pebble, as he brings back guess or dream that sets him off on some fruitful path of discovery. Because of these pebbles he believes that truth exists; and because life builds and discards shells, in some of which his soul can sojourn for longer or shorter visits, that beauty is; and because of smiles, sorrows and actions that move him more intimately than even shells can, that holiness lives. Very little is known, and nothing is so simple as the positive mind supposes; our certainties are approximate and rare, and there are practical inconveniences in supposing them to be more numerous and better consolidated than in truth they are. Let us hasten, while we are in the way with them, to agree with the expressionists; for agreement is greater than disagreement,

and man is always more like other men than unlike them, and mind nearer to mind than to anything else. We are as profoundly convinced as they are that the creative impulse bubbles out from the subconscious, the primitive, and invades the region of ordered conceptions, sometimes with a rush, and cannot be measured by the same standards as those conceptions which it frequently upsets or clashes with. Yet does not the perfection of art consist in fusing this creative outgush with what is rational and acceptable? The phrases: 'Expression is the actuality of intuition as action is of will,' or 'If the essence of art be merely theoretic and it is intuitibility,' etc., appear to us blunt and tactless efforts to map this dim region of surmise, where the images of the mystic look happier, more at home. Nor can we allow that 'distinctions (or corrections) made after reflection have nothing to do with art.' This overinsistence on the spontaneous and irrational element in the genesis of works of art is not only short-sighted as theory, it has lamentable results in practice. Impressionism has led to the self-starvation of the artist's mind and the suicide of talent, as though it were indeed the hunger-strike of the immature against the overbearing rigours of reasoned expectation. The student waits for originality, staring at his own experiences or at nature like a cow, till he finds that nothing comes of nothing and his gift has dwindled and grown dull for lack of food. There is real social danger in the fact that the

art world now consists so largely of these atrophied souls which meet and mate with the futile rich and beget empty fashions. The press finds new copy in meaningless change, and it is always easier to repeat nonsense than to expound sense. Yet Croce is right ; it is the fundamental impulse that occasionally renders the hand of the mother defter than that of the conjurer when, to save the life of her infant, it is necessary to get something back up its throat. This instinctive flair also often enables the bone-setter to cure those whom diplomaed doctors failed to help. So the creative soul, in spite of handicaps, is at moments both more dexterous and more patient than those who delight in never-anxious and self-gratifying parade. Intimate conviction of value differentiates the genius from the virtuoso. Possibly neither rivals the other ; but the one's world costs dear, the other's is cheap. Value does not depend on origin, but it must be willingly paid for by both admirer and creator. You can neither perceive nor create it without concentrating your nature in admiring contemplation or in formative effort. That the occurrence of value depends on just laws, we have no reason to doubt, though any affirmation as to what they are may need much ripening.

Yes, Criticism still finds it impracticable to give an exhaustive analysis or explanation of any structure to which this value, beauty, belongs. We can only say that it has a constitution every change in which will alter that value.

But there is an experimental and practical criticism which is far more important to the growth of taste than disquisition can ever be. As Albrecht Durer said : ' If any man thinks my work can be improved let him show me what he means with his hand.' This is the criticism that the master gives to the pupil or that the artist applies to his own work. Masters, when carrying out a design in the earlier stages of the work, are often governed by rules of thumb derived from past practice ; still as their work nears completion they resort to the experimental method, trying the effect of every change, inventing methods by which such temporary essays can be carried out without becoming irretrievable, and leaving enough time for a conviction as to their value to mature, if they are not convinced the moment they see their effect. This is a kind of criticism that our so-called critics have nothing to do with, yet it alone is certainly effective and leaves no room for misunderstanding, because the correction is as fully realized as is the work corrected.

Have the theorists ever faced the real problem? They take for granted that it is one the intellect can immediately answer. They ask ' Why is this beautiful ? ' as though to know that a thing passes for beautiful were the same as feeling it to be so. That seems beautiful of which a man admires the whole appearance. If this does not happen, of what avail is it for him to recognize in it an extended observation, a perfect subordination of parts according to their essential

truth, the psychological make-up of the author, a resolution of a conflict, or an embodied intuition, or any other definable category of information ?

To improve or correct an admiration, a growth of vitality is needed, not knowledge. A development of faculty alone can increase or refine ability to prefer. The data needed before any general laws can be formulated in æsthetics can only be furnished by genuine admirations. Therefore freedom and congenial conditions for delighted contemplation must be provided wholesale, and results awaited, while strict record of the steps by which these are reached is kept, before criticism can dream of formulating just laws of taste.

To fob off analogies with other sciences, or to pretend that our aim is some metaphysical discovery, must remain bootless, when it is solely truth about admiration and beauty that is sought. The facts to be analysed and arranged have never been collected. We do not know where admiration loyally obeyed would lead to.

But we do know that those alone see beauty who admire it, and that all others are obviously blind to it, even as many are to colours, though in this case the fault need not lie in their optic apparatus. In following the development of our own taste, we should watch and lay ourselves open to the influence of any whose taste appears finer, more developed, or more vital than our own.

It is certain that among the arts, at least



literature is also concerned with truth in another sense, since language is the prime instrument of intellect, and all sentences that can be understood convey some information whether true or false. Yet æsthetically such import is secondary, and never forms the chief value of a poem. The Iliad or Othello are finally measured by the perfection of the admirations which they beget. In like manner as we roughly estimate each other's gifts and ripeness, so we rank great poems as more or less divinely human. We must live in æsthetic moods, in order to refine on or multiply admirations. Our present infatuations can only be corrected by the unfolding and sensitizing of our immature or torpid souls. The following chapter will discuss what way-of-life we should pursue, and how we may advance in it.

## TASTE. I.

Since ideas only exist by definition, being merely distinct meanings, the uses of the word 'taste' must be analysed. As applied to literature and the arts it is already a metaphor. The dictionary defines this meaning as 'intellectual relish, liking, fondness, the power of perceiving excellence in human performances, etc.' Evidently the field may be thus fenced round, but possibly it should also be subdivided. First, does not 'taste' name the faculty by which a tea or wine expert labels a blend or vintage correctly, even when he would rather not have to sip them? That is, taste distinguishes in a scientific sense; and this meaning is often an hostile invader in æsthetic discussion. For if we admire a picture and Morelli proves it is not by the master we supposed, that is no reason for suppressing our liking for it: though it can no longer contribute to our admiration of that artist. Secondly, may not taste describe a preference for Titian's 'L'homme au Gant' over his 'Sacred and Profane Love,' for re-reading Macbeth rather than Othello, or Rossetti's 'Pandora' rather than Wordsworth's 'Toussaint l'Ouverture'? This is an emotive, energising function. What avails it to discriminate good from less good, if you do not like it better? Otherwise you merely recollect by rote from past experience, which can never be so extensive as to include all possible discovery. The beauty never met before cannot be recognized but only felt and enjoyed, preferred for its own sake, not for what is known about it.

This contemplation of a work of art must be passive, in contrast with the intentness with which a cat watches the bird it hopes to dine off. Those who look to gain something by appreciating pictures—influence, or a salary, or the reputation to be won or maintained by differing from or agreeing with some renowned judge—are in danger of having their taste perverted by motives resembling the cat's. Literary critics are obviously often in like case: and this is one reason why all such pronouncements are apt to need superseding. Animal greed had corrupted the judge, his sentence had not ripened under the sun of an admiring preference; on the contrary, satisfaction had been looked for ahead, as from some exercise of power or the production of material changes.

Thirdly, do we not name that faculty taste which begets harmonies, arranges flowers, disposes ribbons, produces works of art? This is an organising constructive power. It is important to realize that this creative taste may differentiate between bad and rough works and also between refined and excellent ones; since it always seizes on the organic integrity or power to live. For instance, novels of real value have often been careless, vulgar or heavy-handed; such faults, as they become antiquated, sometimes detract less and less from the merits they were mingled with. On the other hand poetry is often refined and subtle when without large structure; parts will have more value than the whole. In 'War and Peace' the whole may

far outweigh obvious defects ; entire, ' The Excursion ' can in no sort compete with a few passages cut from it. Yet a poem which is as finely constructed as its most perfect lines, will probably outlive and outshine any work in prose. Does this not tend to appear true of ' Phèdre ' and ' Mme. Bovary '—of the ' Ancient Mariner ' and any well-seasoned novel or tale which you may choose ?

The spirit of our times tends, I think, to confine the conscious exercise of taste to that lowest plane which merely distinguishes. People, rather exclusively bent on knowing, over-value the discrimination of types, they rest content with generalizing. The poet and artist find them a bad public, needlessly sceptical, devoid of enthusiasm, content to sort and label, blind to those degrees of excellence which baffle description and yet separate the masterpiece from any other product of a movement. Our art-lovers like to distinguish, then jump to the conclusion that what they have distinguished is what they like. But it is quite a different thing to be pleased at sorting and naming wild flowers, and to love to gaze at them and admire their forms, growth and characters. The one pleasure in no degree implies the other ; the first is scientific, the second purely æsthetic. Not to separate the planes of preference and creation from that of intellectual discrimination, is to confuse, frustrate, and atrophy taste. The choice and arrangement of flowers, the turning of a compliment, or the re-

editing of a funny story, are higher exercises of taste than are required for a long series of attributions, or in classifying metrical niceties, or in understanding or applying such theories as realism, impressionism or post-impressionism to the contents of a gallery. How much modern interest in art is almost wholly intellectual, almost wholly devoid of æsthetic pleasure, even of a coarse or vulgar kind ! But the intellect can contribute only one element ; and that, though essential to some æsthetic experiences, may be absent in others. Perhaps the most difficult task of an æsthete to-day is to subordinate the intellectual part of an experience. Our schooling results in uppish wits prone to dictate and impose where angels would whisper and suggest. The more variously and harmoniously man is himself, the better he will admire, the more grandly he will create. The distinction that results from marked deficiency is a sorry thing to glorify. Praise of a painter for being ' merely a painter ' is as stupid as praise of a writer for ability to say anything he likes when he does say nothing of importance. Praise of a painter for being poetical has more sense, as it implies that he fuses other excellences with those of form and colour. It is foolish to deny that Michael Angelo's ' Creation of Adam,' Masaccio's ' Tribute Money,' or Giotto's ' Resurrection of St. John Evangelist,' are not the grander for being poetical as well as great painting. It may not be true that all fine painting is poetical in a like sense, though probably there is little that has not

some equivalent largeness of human import. Mere still life, mere landscape, mere pattern may be nicely organized and have decorative effect, but may also often be deficient in moment. This vacuity of their occasion is hardly dispelled, save when necessity imposes some traditional and symbolical significance. Then something of the artist's awe may affect the spectator, though he cannot read the Arabic text that makes the cornice of the mosque sublime, though he have no religious reverence for lions, though for him peony, aster, and bamboo be merely plants, not symbols, though he might never dream Claude's 'Castle' was 'Enchanted' were the title absent. Such felicities can never occur in the work of minds for whom roses are merely flowers, cedars trees, or apples fruit ; much less to those who strive to see them as abstract shape and colour, terrorized by an intellectual dread of the wizard intellect that has so often prompted painters to let poetical or other literary import domineer over graphic beauty till that was starved and died. Nevertheless the rarest, the most fecund opportunities occur only to creators who employ the full powers of their means fearlessly.

Graphic art was in origin writing, and remains akin to it, having meaning ; and without meaning can, I think, never be fully effective. The invention of beautiful shapes which can be read at sight is a still more human excellence than copying of beautiful shapes as Nature turns them out by accident among



many ugly ones. All her works, of whatever diversity of æsthetic values, have an identical relation to any meaning science describes in them, saying: "Here is a moth protects itself by resembling a bird-dropping." The protection acquired is as effective when the life contradicts itself with the appearance of dead and decomposing excrement, as when the form affords the poetical artist a wing for Psyche, or helps him to splice human control to the easily stampeded swiftness of the horse. For a Centaur is a poem, and we may feel the thrill of thought sensuous, passionate, simple, even in work created by races whose mythology is a book trebly sealed like that of the significance of the bulls at Altamira.

The fact that shapes may be loaded with poetical significance and yet have no beauty, is not detrimental to those which have both; neither makes poetical significance a separable element in great works of art, nor unessential to their complete effect. Nor is it matter of indifference when a work of art hints that its author was demented, degraded or vicious: such art cannot rival the equal beauty of works associated with sane and lofty minds. Every element must count in the total effect of an organic whole, every implication; and great beauty is always a highly organised whole. The recent insistence on pure poetry is another one-thing-necessary theory, inspired by a like dread of the seductive intellect, and a like desire to emulate science. These literary puritans would isolate beauties of sensuous appeal from those that result

from grouping characters and events. For them, stories and sequences of purpose and frustration have no poetry, and if beauty, one unfit for verse ; for them the structure of a drama can only perfectly be expressed in prose. Science begets specialists. Compelled by her Medusa gaze, artist and poet must needs specialize. "Divorce poetry at any cost from prose, drama and narrative from verse." This has clearly been the tendency of our time, and poetry must conform to the spirit of the age, not the age to poetry, which would clearly be the ideal and more difficult enterprise.

But the poet should be complete man, not a specialist, save in the art of verse : his function resumes all others under the spell of perfect speech, musical, sensuous, lucid, direct ; for all interests are related to his as they are to language.

Man can never be sure that any object is beautiful by which he has not been profoundly moved, nor on the other hand sure that it is not beautiful and apt to move a finer soul. He can never give more perfect proof of having been so moved than by creating the object of our admiration.

To enjoy merely gazing at things, merely hearing sounds, is probably common to man and many animals and even insects. Such occupation may promote the discovery of food or opportunities for the begetting of offspring ; but it gives pleasure even when these ends are neither attained nor consciously

in view, and thus, indulged in for its own sake, becomes æsthetic. In contemplating objects with liking we are fulfilling the prime requirement for the discovery of beauty. It may be the wrong object or not the best object that we so stare at, nevertheless we have the right attitude towards it. Without liking, no beauty is perceived. We are often blind to the beauty of an object that we see. We may know that it has beauty from past experience, but if we cannot recapture our former liking we see it, but not its beauty. 'The things which I have seen I now can see no more,' as Wordsworth sighed, or as Coleridge moaned 'I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.' When we like or admire, we have this necessary attitude, no matter how defective in beauty the object may actually be. No doubt the snobs of taste may obtain a wholly inæsthetic gratification by despising us for it. Very likely by indulging such contempt they are undermining that superior taste of theirs which makes them so proud. This thought should give relief to those multitudinous persons who have been sniffed at, smiled at, snubbed or abused for genuinely liking to gaze at or listen to something. They have the right attitude; those who disdain them obviously have not, but are, for the moment, mere tools of vanity or policy or some other trash. The most correct usage of the word taste will not cover distaste; aversion is not an exercise of liking. Abhorrence does not imply its equivalence in attraction to something else. A crowd of dislikes is no evidence

of capacity to admire, though it may accompany it. What any man admires can only be a partial revelation of possible beauty, as what any man knows is only a partial discovery of reality. So that after we have enjoyed contemplating something, we may think that there are an infinity of other things which we might so enjoy, and that many of them would absorb more of our faculties more completely ; and that many would demand gifts that we do not possess, or that are embryonic in us, before contemplation of them could fill us with appreciation.

To keep these facts in mind may, I think, revivify our use of the word taste. We shall no longer assume that correctness of information is its value, nor that our own is as good as no matter whose, nor that a new theory is correct so soon as we understand and can apply it ; but we shall remember that theories of æsthetic value must be based on somebody's preferences, and enquire whose, and whether his was creative taste. Then, it may be worth while to attempt to illumine and guide our own by his ; but should this prove impossible, we need neither be ashamed nor scornful, but can wait till our own or his development resolve the conflict between our divergent experiences.

To respect the taste of those equally moved would be a necessity, were there not behind so much discussion to-day ambitions and financial interests, the parvenu's insolence clashing with the place-holder's scorn, the desire of

each generation to jump off the shoulders of its parent, and of those who ruled to prevent being trodden into mire, and, lastly, the wish to sell dear what has been bought cheap.

When we understand that no work of art can be abstracted from its implications, its spiritual atmosphere, any more than we ourselves can be from ours, we shall not pretend to be merely focussed on technique as though we were machines, not men. Finally, might we not be both more worthy consideration and more amiable if we accepted all the facts, and admitted that our manners, dress, furniture, books and pictures were a real index to our development?

Whether our taste merely prefer or construct, its exercise will create so much of our life as can be valued for charm and serenity.

## II

The admiration of beauty is composite: liking and wonder combine in it. Taste is the faculty evolved by the continuance and frequent recurrence of admirations. Diminish liking, and indifference takes its place, and where wonder becomes mere curiosity the result is dry as dust. Increase liking, and you get passion and devotion; while wonder waxing becomes ever more detailed, till it spies an opportunity between the limitations set by the most difficult materials. Lastly, where both liking and wonder are focussed in intensity, creative power appears.

This faculty of taste is a natural growth, a

process of assimilation and rejection. Its development is parallel to that of knowledge ; for science moves from one position to another, tentatively. A conception appears to be true, but experience rejects or corrects, and it is ultimately abandoned for another ; so the child begins by tentatively admiring this or that, asking his elders to share in his pleasure, and correcting his first hasty preferences by their willingness to agree, rejecting those they will have nothing to do with. Should a time arrive when he perceives that they have called ' beautiful ' things which are approved for quite other reasons, because they were fashionable, proper or convenient, then his taste must grow independent or be maimed, for it is no longer a question of the degree of beauty recognised. He must in future, however much the preference of others may guide or illumine his own, often ask himself, ' Do I agree ? Ought this to be called beautiful ? ' So science has had to break away from theological or other orthodoxies, because they declare true what is agreeable to establishments for quite other reasons than the exactness with which facts are described or explained. The investigator finds the position defended no longer tenable ; new events have been observed, a new theory of arrangement with those previously known is required. It is obvious that in most lives social convenience tends to usurp the provinces of scientific enquiry, taste and conscience. The question becomes, not what is verifiable or what is admirable, but what is consonant



with current life. And so with conscience, what is right and what is good come to be what is received or of good report. Then the saint must retire into back streets or go to prison, to find freedom for doing good ; the investigator needs his research laboratory free from all obligation to serve industry ; the artist whose taste continues to grow, shuts himself away where he can contemplate beautiful things and create them, quit of all consideration of payment or approval. They will all even endure poverty and persecution rather than lose these freedoms. The world occasionally perceives this and feels uneasy, but as a rule it is content to declare all these values matters of opinion. ' What is truth ? ' it sneers, ' All the learned disagree. Nothing is right or good but thinking makes it so. What is beautiful ? Why, what pleases me. Words, words, words ! ' So with a laugh the worldly reject every standard save convenience.

But life goes on, and relinquishes none of its modes, or the values they imply. High explosive shells and great wars and widespread famine and distress, where there had been order and comparative plenty, give a rather staggering answer to the snigger ' What is truth ? ' You have, the world begins to surmise, at least to square science, or get it on your side. To know the truth about some things is evidently power.

What can a man do with money when he is too rich ? A good many are driven to collect, that is to attempt to compound with the value

beauty. They have some taste, some refinement ; mere life in hotels and motors bores them to death.

What can a man do when he has children, and sees them or those of previous millionaires rotting themselves in superfluity ? He must find men or women of character, enquire what schools possess such, whether any are to be obtained as private tutors ; for he sees that no other kind of person is likely to succeed in defeating Mammon. Even in posts of great financial temptation a man who has mastered himself, who has convictions of religious definiteness, is more trustworthy than any other kind ; and so the world tries to get virtue to accept an uneasy kind of patronage, it opens an account with goodness. Indifference, cynicism, and loose-living defeat their own ends ; life has put a premium on living fully and will not accept mere continuing alive in lieu of it. Science, art, and virtue are life's fulness ; for the more absorbing the curiosity, the more overwhelming the admirations, the more single-minded the devotion, the more radiant life is. Persons of these three kinds are often in a special sense centres of animation ; they are exciting to meet, so much so that by far the greater number tend to be submerged in crowds that collect about them ; for such coteries often undermine the fundamental conditions on which creation depended, and then leave their artist marred or debauched for the next nucleus of animation. I remember at school to have seen the surging crowd around a poor

little fellow from some gold-field in Australia who could sing lewd mining songs with great gusto. I remember a glimpse of his tears and terror when his tyrannical audience would not let him alone, though they had temporarily exhausted his effervescence. In the lives of how many brilliant and even great geniuses may be read the tragedy that then made me sick with impotent sympathy? Those whose gifts are linked with no superficial animation escape very real ordeals, to which many even better endowed may succumb. The blind brutality of mere mankind easily becomes destructive, and spells 'war' and 'robbery.' The world is this brutality more or less disguised in clothes. Men devoted to science, art, or goodness are the authors and finishers of such pattern garments as kindness, respect for truth, refined speech, grace in movement, an exterior deference for others, an affectionate bearing, cleanliness, orderliness, integrity. This all who reflect recognise to be the actual constitution of human life ; and that it is so might almost seem arranged for our good, has indeed often been called providential. Look at it. The individual who does his best, who strives to protect objects, customs or persons in which he descries the values, beauty and goodness, by so doing discovers ever more surely where they really are. Acting on his actual perceptions he has increased his power for acting on those more correct ones which succeed to them ; so that as experience teaches him where he was wrong in attributing value, he

finds in himself more power for creating or protecting valuable objects, customs and persons—which is just what we desire should happen.

Of course the spirit of enquiry, the hunger for discovery, must be vigorous if such experiments are to be continued.

This strengthening of taste happens, even though in seeking to exalt the admired object we actually damage or destroy it ; as when a child picks a flower and holds it up to give it importance of position and win admiration for it from others, and its hot pud causes the flower immediately to droop. If these were its motives, and not the mere lusts of possession and of the exercise of power, then even though its efforts fail, its respect for beauty will have become more discriminating, more cautious. Many a boy must bear indelibly stamped on his mind the anguish of discovering how very difficult it is to prevent brushing the glorious meal from the wings of butterflies—may even thus have learnt how to handle delicate instruments or even persons. So a scientist's absorption in discovery of truth stiffens and refines after failing experiments, while he who had half an eye to commercial exploitation is disgusted and put off.

No one's taste is all it might have been had they been always able and ready to act on it. No actual persons are perfectly courageous, unintermittently persevering or wholly consequent, though some men approach nearer this ideal than others. Taste might in Angels

increase like money at compound interest, but few men, and only in rare periods of their lives, actually enrich their souls at any such pace.

Most, having gained a very little very insecurely, try to defend that rather than to acquire greater insight ; they confuse spiritual satisfaction with material well-being, and become obstinate and bigoted, because every one who suggests that their taste or their morals might be improved seems to them to endanger their rations or to be kicking the world from beneath their feet. This process of growth from repeated experiment does not amount to a complete providence : for the most pertinacious loyalty is not protected from casualties—earthquakes, wars, robbers, the ignorance of others or his own : though the saints seem occasionally to have achieved surprising immunities in regard to some of these. However, men animated by the spirit of enquiry, the love of beauty or of goodness, all advance beyond their past achievements ; and in so far as their loyalty flags or is turned aside, lose power for investigation, whether in art and appreciation or in the ordeals of virtue or in science. Of course they may gain social or political power by such infidelities, but social and political values rarely coincide with these real values which alone give significance to life ; which significance is often apparently confused, overshadowed or contradicted by social and political events. A marked approach to truth, beauty and goodness need not and rarely does go hand

in hand with success as the world judges of it.

Men cannot think or admire or contemplate or act with increasing power unless they are loyally applying one or more of these values to their experience. Of course they may make every kind of mistake in regard to that application. A child or a savage does not think the same things true, beautiful or good as a Cabinet Minister, a Slade Professor or a Bishop ; nor do these see eye to eye with an Einstein, a Charles Ricketts or a Dr. Grenfell of Labrador. There are endless depths and qualities of obtuseness in regard to these real values,—which we must all acknowledge in some degree, or court madness and despair. Trained mind, taste, or sympathy can penetrate and understand what the child or savage think, enjoy or approve ; their appreciation can include and place those primitive ones, as also those of dignitaries in state or university or church. The world and the fashions generally acclaim the wrong works and persons first and loudest ; that is only what ought to be expected. These mistakes are not always recognized and corrected by history ; the evidence of some of them may disappear before they are corrected. Mankind is not only blind about contemporaries, but in a less degree about past examples ; though of course men who truly succeed, since they all have the same general direction while the masses are either stagnant or move at random, tend to correct opinion and bring it slowly nearer the truth.



All judgments respecting beauty are necessarily imperfect ; therefore for individuals it may always be right to be wrong, because only by being wholeheartedly wrong can they experiment, discover their mistake and learn to make a less absurd one. Scientists and saints have perceived that this is the case far more clearly and more often than æsthetes, whose pretensions still are apt to resemble those of sorcerers and dervishes. But of course this perception is one of the easiest things to forget, and goes out of the mind that is familiar with it, and meant to be docile, and yet discovers that its attitude once again has become stiff-necked.

Most critics take for granted that one judgment is right, another wrong. I have tried to show that all must be inadequate and that their value depends on their relation to the individual judging, and cannot be lost save when he pretends to like what he does not, concealing his true preference by false behaviour. A further value relates appreciation to an ideal man not known to exist, not known to have existed, not known to be going to exist: this value cannot be measured, though it is both real and necessary. Its practical result is to for ever dissolve content, with a pleasing anxiety that hankers after possibilities ahead, building up an undogmatic, pliant, and life-like temper. Admiration and æsthetic liking being essential, logic and reason are secondary, where beauty is gauged.

Were science to occupy itself with æsthetics,

so as to ascertain the direction in which perfect beauty may lie, it must first, I conceive, collect statistics of life-sequences of admirations, recording how one gave place to another from childhood to age, and how in diverse individuals these lines of advance tend toward a focus. A well-nigh hopeless task considering the equivocal nature of the evidence. Nevertheless only so could the experimental method address itself to the discovery of the truth about beauty in its relation to life.

Finally, has it not been asseverated that in India and China art has been founded on metaphysics and derives virtue from an unknown and unknowable spiritual state, participation in which is the reward of complete renunciation? Yet life is already such a participation, and all art is pregnant with it. For are we not fused with life as with nothing else? Do we not ignore both what it is and even whether it be most essentially cause or effect, gift to, exploiter of or product of the cell's mechanism? while we must either renounce perfection for it, or it for perfection. Life's urgency seems to promise a second universe, possibly co-extensive with that material one which it reveals and refuses to rest content with. To cease to live, though a necessity, appears, to most westerners at least, an unlikely sublimation of the process of living, such as can only be looked forward to by those devoid of humour. This mystic aspiration appears more cryptic than suggestive, and can only be supposed luminous to

those who have transcended human existence, if any have.

Mr. Graham Wallace well says "A sincere student of psychology in the twentieth century is forced to know, that to base one's whole religious faith on the psychological feeling of certainty is to leave oneself unprotected against the thought that certainty is not the same thing as truth." And he quotes a Catholic who asks, "Is the sense of unity in totality, of indefectible certitude, hallucinatory? If so the Catholic Church is one vast madhouse. . . ." And we may add that Buddhism and Brahmanism are two others. The tests of truth can no more be applied to such revelations than to dreams.

Christ's "By their fruits ye shall know them" which is an appeal to common experience, may have saved some Christian churches from this insane dependence on unverifiable convictions—for which no counterproof, it is claimed, is needed save the blessed sense of certitude. The experiment supposed to yield it to Yogi and ascetic is a slow suicide, of which the result is never known here.

On the other hand, the Ajanta frescoes and Chinese statuary represent recognizable objects as our own arts do, and their various degrees of merit also depend not on verisimilitude alone, but on that organized with technical address, imaginative suggestions and select proportions. These works range beside European work as moths compare with butterflies, not as butterflies contrast with birds. Must not those who pretend that

totally disparate principles are involved desire to abuse our credulity with exaggerations? Obviously the influence of Gautama and his saints has moulded Buddhist art in much the same sense as that of Christ and His saints has influenced ours. Both bad and good works have taken these imprints, and therefore neither Christianity nor Buddhism can claim to ensure quality or value, though without them certain supreme masterpieces must have lacked their opportunity. If these Asiatic productions insist less on man's life and more on what our presumption names the lower life of animals and plants, less on animate and more on inanimate elements, our art has also known that mood, and theirs does not ignore our self-infatuation. Only such differences are in question as divide Dutch from Italian efforts, or modern from Greek.

All general claims to rightness are then inevitably absurd. Yet nothing is so tempting to an eager mind as to imagine that it is at last in an assured position, its own past mistakes and those of other people are so clearly seen. A great docility is needed to foresee that the present feeling of rightness is necessarily as illusive as any other, is but one rung on the ladder that can only be mounted by leaving it behind. The ladder implies its top, and so do conscience, taste, and inquiry imply their several goals. To this degree there is evidence of the absolute; so much is part of the meaning of the words goodness, beauty, truth. But obviously, by creatures

so limited as human beings at present are, ultimate degrees must remain for long unattained. Most men acknowledge this in regard to truth, and hold that there is a constitution of the universe; and that they would be right in this conclusion, even if it should prove to have spirit for basis, or even if that constitution should prove incoherent, as the quantum theory has suggested to some minds. Still the truth about it would exist. Even though men may never be able to discover it, still they hold that it must exist. Though far fewer perceive this, the case is the same in regard to beauty, and in regard to goodness. These characters, though not fully known, are possible, and implied in the approximations that actual bodies and tempers make to them. They are discoverable. Even a truth does not exist *for us* till we discover it, though the facts which it comprehends exist. So the facts that make beauty and goodness possible exist. There is an ascertainable acme of human development, though we cannot ascertain it. Our senses and wills set out with indefinite handicaps, and are inevitably balked of perfection. The past clings to us as a cuttlefish will to a swimmer, and holds us back and submerges our best efforts. But beauty is what the swimmer that escaped all hindrances would admire, goodness is the quality his temper would have. Ignorance hinders as the sea does, both hinders and helps, for goodness and beauty depend on knowing the truth, as well as on deliverance from all less

universal shortcomings. Such inquiries are wholly speculative, yet they have meaning because their possibility is implied in all experience, is assumed by all investigators, in all creative art, in all effort to fuse our being with goodness. Conscience and taste and the experimental method of investigation are one and the same process, only the fields of their several activities are distinct.

### III

If we accept this description of the process of taste, it is at once evident why in modern times it results in such a clamour of confusion. Take a waiting-room full of men, and it might be significant to classify them;—one as a food-gatherer, a second as of the stone-age, a third of the bronze; a fourth would only be at home in a state that lived by annually raiding its neighbours, a fifth in the Athens of Pericles, a sixth in Stoic Rome, a seventh in the Middle Ages; an eighth, ninth and tenth belong to the Renaissance, the eighteenth, the nineteenth; and the last to the twentieth century in which they are all alive. It is just possible there might be a superman or an ape among them. This classification would not be exact, but sufficient to indicate well-known attitudes of mind, for we recognize any number of kinds and degrees of atavism.

Now each one of these, granting them straightforwardness, would be inclined to impose his own cosmology, his own taste, his own sense of right and wrong, on all the others. It would



seem proved right by his experience, and his fellow-feeling would prompt him to aid and abet any or all of the others to arrive at such a satisfying outlook. If he were a school-master or a parent, and they were all children, his temptation to impose his own views on them would be well-nigh irresistible, and probably on the whole beneficial so long as he could do it. But his success would be thwarted in every kind and degree by the fact that they all were, behind his back or out of school, carrying on a similar propaganda each for his own outlook. Now these were all quite honest creatures. But the majority of mankind is only so-so in regard to honesty. Financial, social, political interests complicate their behaviour and make them less single-minded missionaries, but often put far more power behind their activity than belongs to it as individuals. Lastly, not only are they all poor knaves, conscious of more failure in themselves than any of them knows certainly to afflict his neighbour, but they are all subject to remorse and repentance of every degree of sham and genuineness; and by far the greater number of them are to boot superstitious, that is, governed in their behaviour not alone by mistakes about real objects and events, but by imaginations concerned with things that are either not subject to investigation or have never been so subjected. And with all this you get only a feeble sketch of the possible diversities of conception and intention shut up in a score of human skulls. Now grant that a direct and successful

approach to knowledge, to holiness and to fine taste, is possible from all these widely scattered positions, on condition that each striver is loyal to experience, allowing it to prompt or demolish his opinions freely; and we may easily understand why so few succeed, so partially; and why so many who have obviously failed give over their lives to proclaiming a success they know they have fallen short of, and arrogate to themselves vain ovations for it.

The straight path of success runs from every possible position to perfected experience. External calamities may prevent; but if they do not, complete loyalty will succeed, though from most positions it might require more than one life-time. But who has ever been continually sincere? Whose integrity is without a flaw? Yet every whole-hearted decision makes a number of others easier, and these in their turn increase the range and power of discernment in a rapidly accumulating ratio; but each failure in a similar ratio makes decision less easy, confines the view of possibility, and weakens energy, so that men are for ever varying the pace with which they move forward to integration or backward towards disruption. Not only do they start from diverse stations and travel at various rates; but they rest by the way, or loiter, or force their pace and lame themselves, so that they must limp; or even forget their goal and desist for years, return on their own steps, or in full retreat turn again and re-gather what was wasted or lost.

Besides, of course, taste, conscience, and enquiry after truth are not normally exercised on every occasion. They can but very gradually dominate the whole of a man's life, if they ever do. In the majority of cases that demand an æsthetic judgment, a student's solution is mechanical, habitual or instinctive, and it is right that it should be so. Nothing produces so many psychological set-backs as the premature or unprepared forcing of conscious attention to possible problems that the person would naturally pass without perceiving. This is a prolific cause of failure in education. We totally ignore the order and pace at which attention can be increased without confusion and harm resulting. No doubt when a conscious æsthetic judgment has been acted on, and the instinctive mechanical solution rejected, this mere fact opens a number of other doors or avenues for such judgments; and if these are all taken, experience accumulates at a rapid rate and a sense of constant success is engendered. But we must remember that every conscious failure closes doors and avenues, and reduces enterprise and assurance. Far better to let occasion's ordeal pass undetected, than be aroused to perceive it, only to fail.

We stir our friends up and stimulate one another, wholly without respect for actual particular needs and capacities. We should be readier to see fields for the cultivation of taste or virtue lie fallow on either side of our children. To call their attention to these neglected opportunities may be anything but

kind or wise. The stimulus and the readiness to receive it must be coincident, for benefit to accrue. Before the development is ripe to react, an insistent demand for a response only frustrates or warps growth. Thus we should think of others' taste, conscience or search for truth, as alive somewhere, in regard to one series of cases, though they seem blind and deaf to most that flash and cry out to us. It is from that point, through that series of cases, that they can progress; and until we discover it, we cannot help them, and judge them unjustly. Thus too, good taste is a different thing for almost every individual. It is his taste which is good for him, not yours or mine; only by avowing it and acting on it can he improve it. And if we hold up our hands in horror or turn away with a smile of contempt, we are the gulls, not he. He has lived and developed, we have missed an opportunity for sympathy and understanding. His attitude was right, ours wrong, though we had the better judgment. How often have I seen a room full of snobs in taste become self-conscious, awkward and silent, at the naïve expression of someone's more vulgar admiration; and no word of encouragement vouchsafed to the essential act of progress, and joy in life, save by possibly the most advanced present, who has cried, "That's right! If you like it, say so! To be afraid to like is the real misfortune." Still if we really think what we do right, we are right to do it, even though it be preaching to the young out of season or withholding approval from a genuine

act of taste. For only so will bitter experience teach us to beware of that loving-kindness that is most pitiless, or that superiority which lies far longer than any ox would upon the humble flowers of the field. We are only snobs when we do not really disapprove, yet pretend to.

If people could be induced to keep this picture of taste's development and its probable verisimilitude in mind, they would no longer believe in movements, or periods, or theories or panaceas ; and would know that excellence was bound to be individual and often only to belong to a given year or two out of an artist's life, to one or two objects or creators in a period. Under these summits would range a greater number of more or less near approaches to them. However divergent from their own, others' taste, especially if it seemed genuine, would receive their tender respect: they would never 'insult, exult and all at once over the wretched.' General revolutions would no longer seem desirable, but it would be perceived that to 'down' the Victorians in order to 'up' the early seventeenth century, or to proclaim that Renaissance painting kicks the beam when weighed against Byzantine mosaic, or that Greek supremacy must vail before Chinese, were to give proof of weak taste, adulterated by political or social motives. Such judgments have no likelihood, are too gross and clumsy to impose on those whose taste is independent and whose judgments are in consequence concerned with particular cases of excellence. For who can admire a

period with the fullness or intimacy with which he may a single master or masterpiece? Who can live with two separate ages at the same time, so as to compare their excellences with an equal appreciation for their diverse virtues?<sup>1</sup> We should realize that this extremist behaviour is as disgusting to sober refinement as highway robbery and hooliganism. It is a call to a crowd; it supposes the purpose of becoming a leader or a willingness to be led, and may be safely left to politicians and mobs. The habit of looking at things in mass or generality is anti-æsthetic. Science may be slightly interested in such speculative surveys, but neither taste nor conduct can suffer divorce from particular cases. The tasteful mind becomes purely intellectual while it indulges in these vast enquiries. An early Egyptian vase may stand beside a modern milk-jug, and taste know which it prefers without knowing their dates or provenance in the least. To know these things and to have general opinions about their relation to particular fashionable judgments, is to run a risk of suborning taste; and taste is often so corrupted. Only an illusion of perspective sees all artists tasteful, in the Middle Ages, in Egypt or Peru. If the little that is left from some periods is on the whole so admirable as to tempt our fondness to suppose that all which has perished was of a like quality, this only happens where the

<sup>1</sup> *As an amusing instance of this tendency in ardent and ignorant minds, remember Shelley and Hogg's first conversation.*



whole range of excellence considered is extremely confined.

The modern soul is in as vast a jungle of art as it has attention to perceive. In comparison all our predecessors walked through narrow streets. The range of their possible errors was infinitely smaller. Our vast hunting-ground creates well-nigh savage feasts and indigestions,—men familiar with thousands of works of art who genuinely admire few or none, like philanthropists eloquent for enslaved millions, who feel nothing but distaste or contempt for their personal acquaintance. No doubt these are evils for which opportunity was never so abundant before. Your saint saves man after man ; it is surely politically-minded impostors who save crowds, not infrequently only to massacre them a while later? So the man of taste admires this and then that, and few indeed can enjoy a range of experiences such as the expert or the historian must consider ; hence these gentlemen embrace not numerous admirations or aversions but merely evidence for genuineness or authenticity.

The need for absolute loyalty to actual experience was never so crying before, the temptation to substitute theory, knowledge, or social ambition for taste was never so great. But fidelity to taste alone can reward with more abundant joy in beauty, whatever the sacrifices of ambition and comfort it may impose.

The taste even of a Flaubert or a Rossetti, a

Baudelaire or an Arnold, a Paul Valéry or a Charles Ricketts, is necessarily limited. The delicacy of the senses, the energy of attention, the courage for acting on experience, will fail here or there in them or in any others whose names may be preferred. Besides, all of them suffer from accumulated hindrances due to the untimeliness of experiences, or a dearth of them, or of freedom to exploit them. Yet all of these men improved their taste during several more or less continuous spells, and are examples of very rare gift and acquirements among their contemporaries, and are all pre-eminently men of taste as well as creators. Doubtless some of them might have excluded others from their ideal Academies with intemperate language. But to anyone who had given an whole-hearted admiration to them all, these dissensions among them appear as their misfortunes, due to those failures in timeliness and circumstance. Dissension and confusion tend perhaps to increase as you go down the scale of eminence for taste ; but long before indifference is reached they decrease, till all the apathetic are at one in preferring nothing. With such a group of eminent æsthetes before his mind's eye,—and anyone can form an alternative of his own choice,—what inordinate vanity must be displayed by the man who would absolutely exclude another's equally eminent choice, or suppose himself immune from very fundamental errors of judgment ! Yet how much of the most intelligent criticism we read displays this absolutism, which would seem in a more

native place among hot-headed sects or in the Holy Inquisition or in the lobbies and corridors of a Parliament or Soviet. This violence of adverse assertions is a blight on the growth of taste, very apt to increase as the plant flourishes, till unsightly ravage mock its most portly development. Yet should not to be forewarned prove to be forearmed against its insidious attack ?

## PIVOTS

Ideas are distinct meanings.

To distinguish is not to value.

To value is to prefer.

Art creates objects to be admired.

Taste grows by the experimental process as knowledge does, only its criterion is beauty, not truth, and demands admiration, not comprehension.

Conduct follows the same method with the criterion goodness, and looks for approval and collaboration in the world of action.

The perception that a man is good is quite as different in kind from the perception that the theory of geodesics tallies with observed facts, as it is from the perception that the swallow's flight is more beautiful than the rook's.

All three kinds are equally necessary to perfect psychic poise. Knowledge is discovered only by those who probe, beauty only by those who admire, goodness only by those who render practical help.

Our taste grows as we act on it and recognize our mistakes, or go one better than our successes. It is essentially a venture, an experiment. If we cling to what it is, we stifle what it might be.

To set a thing right or to do it again and better, is the most desirable result of being aware of its defects, and the only way in which criticism can furnish a counterproof.

The academic professor and the art-rebel, the mature and the juvenile bigot, have this in common :—both hope to lead taste like a pet dog on the end of a string, or limit its freedom to a single walk. Both are great anathe-matizers ; their furious flames spring from wicks dipped in the same oil, human vanity.

The activities prompted by taste are the creation, protection, display and praise of admired objects.

Taste serves the contemplative Aphrodite ; men, liberal in worship of the practical sensual goddess, often neglect her passive and spiritual twin.

Taste is as free as liking, as primordial and unconfined : the courage it begets laughs at paddock and leading-string.

Cenacles and coteries seek importance, not contemplative delight, and their would-be leaders are merely busy forming cabinets of authority.

Life gives authority to taste : social power and finance can only acquiesce or oppose.

Modern art-criticism and psychology con-

stantly confuse knowledge with preference, sorting with selection, and origin with value.

Since admiration is the only temper aware of beauty ; since it waxes in strength and correctness of aim in proportion as it is loyally acted on and freely re-canvassed, the data from which a science of æsthetics might be raised can only be collected when the progress of taste through many suitably conditioned lives has been recorded and compared.

Self-annihilation or absorption in unity, the Asiatic ideal, is deduced from a confusion of the values goodness and truth ; just as realism, impressionism, etc., are deduced from a confusion of beauty with truth.

To conclude that because evil exists, existence must be evil, does not prove non-existence good. As a matter of fact good names a quality of existent things and must lose all meaning when used as a metaphor of the non-existent.

Perspective shows us parallel lines meeting on the horizon ; so speculation shows us parallel values uniting in the future. It would be a great satisfaction to know that all three values were fused in that far distant point : but this analogy should suggest that they may be as separate there as here.

If evil truly is, though it be but an illusion, then something is true which is not good ;



and we shall learn that we truly have been deceived, only to condemn that fact as evil. To call evil an illusion neither makes it less evil nor less really part of our experience.

Yet that we advance in experience of truth, goodness, and beauty by the same process of hypothesis, experiment and corrected hypothesis renders all three values equally akin to our capacity for development ; which is, in so far, both harmonious and gratifying.

Naked Truth lurks in the deepest well, naked Beauty haunts sea-solitudes, and Goodness needs no veil in heaven.

## THEORY AND PRACTICE.

### I

The differences that this conception of Taste, when understood and accepted, must needs create in a critic's approach to works of art are even more striking than the idea itself. Theoretic reasons for admiring sensuous objects will be at once recognized as nonsense. Judgments founded on history or psychology will no longer be allowed weight : therefore pedigrees of influence will rank as æsthetically futile curiosities, only important to the historian or psychologist. Disquisitions on the virtues or vices of an author or artist, however interesting as tittle-tattle, will be regarded as dangerous distorters of our veritable experience. For hero-worship, though as natural as monster-worship, is no better aid to æsthetic contemplation ; it too can at best but focus attention. Then how will a critic, inspired by this idea, approach his task ? Unfortunately I must proffer my own work as example. Yet, if Chapter II on *The Meaning of Beauty* be regarded as the brain of this book, that on *Taste*, Chapter V, as the conscience or innate valuer, then the following lectures may demonstrate the heart's action which focusses vitality and sustains Admiration alive, flushing the members with that which makes their life other than an idea—an actual sequence of events. The flood of instinctive preferences is rightly likened to animation, for, unsustained by it, no æsthetic judgment can be born or mature. Any cold or reasoned counterfeit of such a judgment is as dissimilar

from it, as the living body from a stuffed doll. I therefore print the following lectures as delivered, that they may retain the air of an act over and above their force as argument.

## II<sup>1</sup>

A long concentration of desire and appreciation precedes art to-day, as it did, no doubt, in the cave-dwellings of Altamira and Les Eyzies. The prehistoric cave-dweller drew with amazing power the bison ; he drew men and trees hardly recognizably. His life was one long watchful preparation for triumph over this huge bulk of meat. He knew it better than the breeder knows the horse, his teeth and tongue had discussed all the various densities of its flesh. Well-being of every kind resulted, when with inadequate weapons he yet killed it. Did we know anything of his ideas we should probably find it at the centre of his magic, his religion. Concentration on its aspects was further intensified for the artist caveman by the poverty of his means of expression, some dark ochres and a few rough cheeks of limestone in the dingy antres which in other respects he left much as he had found them. It preoccupied his leisure, he drew and rubbed out and drew again, his eyes were on it, whether present or absent, as those of a young man on the girl he wants to marry. So the officer of a submarine cons enemy ships, so the collector broods over some rare specimen, so is the craftsman fascinated

<sup>1</sup> *Delivered at Leicester School of Art in February, 1915.*

by a difficult job. Creative art (and no other is fine) means that life's admiration, long focussed, has burst into flame. Civilization, art schools, teachers, books, photographs, lectures, tend to disperse and divide this energy by providing ready opportunities for its exertion. We forward the young in every way we can—yet we learn from our lives, and from those who have told most truth about themselves, that as much has been owed to obstructions which roused a stubborn reaction as to any help received. Who shall say how much sunshine and how much frost are needed, and, above all, when a clement spell and when an inclement will be timely? This, the fundamental question, has not yet been faced by educationalists. What is called progress has not made the essential problems of life easier to solve, but immensely more complex. Kind conditions may enervate, may even smother and kill, almost as effectively as unkind. Though France by equalizing opportunity has drawn numbers of geniuses from classes that in England rarely yield any, our upper classes, who have every advantage, have not been made richer in exceptional individuals; and if the middle classes do best in this respect, it would seem to be because their conditions are far less all on one pattern than those above and below them. Turn from the world and examine the soul's dower; we find that it is not always the most gifted who succeed best. How many bad artists have been able and dexterous? How many great artists have been handicapped by some crazy flaw or

sudden stiffness of mind ? Yet neither is this a rule, for the gifted have more opportunities of becoming focussed as well as of accepting an easy dissipation. Then please understand I have no golden advice to offer. On the contrary I am convinced that none exists either in my head or in anyone else's. Golden rules always deceive sooner or later.

What is theory then ? Is it merely " sound and fury signifying nothing " ? No. Theory is a very bare and generalized description of past practice, or of what is mistakenly supposed to have been past practice, or of something which it is presumptuously supposed could take the place of past practice. If it is a true description, it gives us so much information in a convenient form ; if it is false, or baseless, it is a very poisonous form of deception. But whether sound or fallacious, it has no authority ; yet nine men out of ten seek authority in a theory. An example may help here. A theory, which passes as authoritative nearly everywhere, asserts, that in architecture construction should not be disguised but should govern the appearance of the building, as the skeleton controls that of the human body. In so far as this is true about the best examples of certain schools, Egyptian, Gothic, etc., it is valuable information. But many Italian Gothic churches have a façade which is practically a screen set up so as to hide the building and create an anomaly in its construction. Not infrequently such churches are more beautiful than others which conform far better to the theory.

This fact disposes of the authority of the theory.

Only in the most general sense can we assume that, being works of man, masterpieces will continue to be human. Though it is obvious that we should study and remember if we hope in our turn to be studied and remembered, study leads as often to reaction as to assimilation. There is no reason why the next masterpiece should conform to this or to that, or here more than there. The commonest of all mistakes is to accept a generalized conception of the way some masterpiece or masterpieces are supposed to have been achieved, as having regulative authority over future practice. This only breeds opposition, in the form of that other fatal mistake which supposes that the next work of art will be fundamentally unlike those that have preceded it : so that a new theory must be concocted before it can come into being. This is the pitfall of our new "ists"—impressionists, post-impressionists, cubists, etc., etc., just as the other is the mistake of the old academicians and of all who preach conformity to known methods. Is there then no authority? Is no obedience or loyalty of any avail? You will meet many men who will declare that where æsthetics are concerned there is none. "These," they will say, "are mere matters of taste: and one man's meat is another man's poison." But has "taste" no authority? Why, everywhere it subordinates man to man. Everywhere ardent liking wins attention, and respect imposes its judgments. No intellectual



or pedantic conviction will, or does, stand before its dictum. The authority of evident enjoyment is the authority of life itself. To admire is to live fully.

"Yes," you demur, "but people delight in such various, such contradictory things. Such astounding preferences are met with." Don't be frightened of them. Don't avoid them. Allow them whatever authority they can exercise. However, there is often a real difficulty in distinguishing between taste and intellectual convictions trespassing on the province of art. Intellectual convictions are always wrong, because when we really know we feel that conviction is wasted, the force of facts is there, the thing *is*. The only fact behind taste is enjoyment—delight in certain proportions and harmonies : though a theory may describe them in relation to other instances, it can never explain the delight which carries us off our feet. The secret of this joy is one of those things that are not and which will, as the mystic asserts, bring to nought the things which are, as surely as the idea of the slain buffalo in the mind of the prehistoric hunter brought down sturdy bull after bull ; but mysticism carries no weight in argument, it is a mere appeal to particular experiences. We know what takes us, we never know why we are taken. Therefore, if we say we are moved for a reason, we deceive ourselves. Either we have not been moved and pretend to be so because we think we ought to have been ; or we are moved and pretend we should not have been if a certain reason were less

sound—whereas that object would continue to move us though the falseness of all reasons were suddenly flashed into our minds. Reasons refer back to æsthetic theories ; and, admitting any theory to be a true description of a class of formerly studied objects, it was never the truth of that theory which caused those objects to be admired : but the fact that each of those objects had in turn been admired suggested that those characters which they had in common might be the most essentially admirable, but did not prove even this. I will give an example of how this perception becomes important practically. A young writer recently won some praise for a book on æsthetics. He holds that butterflies and jewels ought not to be called beautiful, but only pretty, as their colours and forms have no significance. I was looking the other day at the Brazilian swallow-tail *Protesilaus* when this dogma of his recurred to me, and I exclaimed “ Fancy telling a monstrous lie like that for the sake of an argument ! ” The myth of *Psyche* whom Keats called “ the loveliest vision far of all Olympus’ faded hierarchy ! ” rebukes such blindness, and chooses these wings as the most proper to lift the soul. Once we pretend to know why a thing is beautiful, we think reason can correct taste, and scold ourselves and deny the authority of our own experience. We might as well rebuke ourselves for calling brimstone yellow or for not calling rubies green.—But some people do call ugly things beautiful.—Not because they feel them ugly. Taste is exactly

parallel to conscience and has a parallel authority. Do we expect conscience to act perfectly? Not at all. We know we may be conscientiously mistaken. We say "If I knew no more than I then knew, I should have to do it again, though I now see it was wrong." If conscience is not always right, why do we trust it, why do we make our laws bow before the conscientious objector? What is the authority we so patently respect? The doctrine of conscience is not so well understood nowadays as it was in the seventeenth century. Milton delivers it through the mouth of God, thus:

'My Umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,

Light after light, well us'd, they shall attain.'

This implies that to use our conscience must be to have our light turned into darkness by a greater light which will reward our having used the less. Remark, that is what scientists believe. They take for granted that the knowledge they now have will look like ignorance beside that they may attain to by pursuing knowledge with knowledge. Then they look back into the past and see that this really has happened, and that knowledge which greater minds than their own achieved with difficulty now looks like ignorance beside their actual acquisitions. That this process can go on for ever no one can assert. It is the hypothesis with which they work; but that it must stop is a very impertinent opinion for which there can be no ground but prejudice. All go-ahead men work on this hypothesis, whether scien-

tists, labourers in the practical field, or artists or poets. It is the parable of the talents, 'From him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he hath,' and to him that useth his talents shall be given more and yet more. The people called conscientious have lowered the repute of this hypothesis by a grotesque distortion of it ; for they often make up their minds as to what is right in a number of eventualities, and then lay the process aside and act on the precedents created. They know what is right and do it : what need have they for additional light ? as if their conscience had told them wrong ? But it has ; it always must ! It only informed them for the next step rightly. After that was taken, light generated by taking it ought to have revealed something beyond. Conscience is live, not dead ; it needs food and exercise ; and, like an infant, must not be merely rocked to sleep, or so tightly swaddled that it becomes a mummy. In like manner taste always tells us wrong : its rightness is only temporary, dependent on our present ignorance and insensitive torpor. As we grow out of these it will reveal new qualities to us, some of which may even contradict those it had once revealed. A wrong action may be right for us, because to exchange a gross error for one less gross is the next step upward towards well-doing. Or, in bettering our taste, the only approach to the perception of beauty may be through admiration of such and such ugly things. So doctors often restore men to health by dosing them with poison. There is

an old, old story of how Moses, while he kept Jethro's flock in the backside of the desert, wandered brooding on the theology which he had learned in Egypt, and came upon a simple shepherd who had set out some cheese and bread and a bowl of water, and strewn flowers round, and was inviting God to come and sit on a convenient stone, and partake of the feast. He promised to comb God's hair and wash His feet and make Him comfortable. Moses, horrified, rebuked him, saying: "Is God a man that He should need bread? How should His feet be soiled or His locks matted? Know that He is a spirit and cannot be served in these ways." Next day when Moses passed he saw the shepherd sitting glum and disconsolate, for, rebuked by so learned a man, he knew not what he ought to do. Then God spake in the heart of Moses and said: "Why does my servant no longer worship me? Go and tell him that I was well pleased with his homage and took delight in his offerings." Moses obeyed, so that the shepherd prepared his welcome for God with more gladness than hitherto. Yes, yes, respect the taste of those who genuinely admire things which it would be a degradation of our own to praise, and remember that what we admire may no longer seem admirable to better judges. Many men exert their consciences when young, register the result, and abide by it as a rule for life. Those men are surprised to find their sons' consciences in opposition to their own, which has become fossilized by being worshipped instead of used. It is the same with taste.

Morris ? But do you think the young Morris would to-day accept what the old Morris preached ? Ruskin would be in revolt against Ruskin to-day. There are no comfortable havens where we can retreat from the anguish of deciding each case on its own merits. Past decisions are lumber. Better confess inability to decide, if taste has not forestalled you by a thrill of pleasure or a wince of aversion. Every decision is a lie that is not based on this. There is good and bad in all schools. All sound theories apply equally well to some wretched and to some fine works, because they were followed slavishly in those, with insight in these. His own work suggests to the artist how he can go at least one better next time. And this is true in some degree of the craftsman and designer : the changes they can make are often quite imperceptible to other eyes, but the moment they cease to strive to surpass themselves they lose ground. Little by little is the safest pace, and wherever you may happen to be, the proper starting-point. The straight path of success leads from everywhere to perfection.

Creative souls have wings, but they rarely fly so straight or so far as craftsmen have crawled in Egypt, in China, in Byzantium, in England. The eighteenth century saw the best English home architecture, furniture, and plate, slowly evolved. Machinery ruined all that, except the cottage crockery, which was saved by the negroes of the Gold Coast. They refused the printed crockery which debauched the home market ; and the old English ware



was made for them all through the nineteenth century until my friend Mona Wilson went inspecting, found this ware being made with leadless glaze, and, recognizing how gay and effective it was, told the manufacturer that he could sell it at home if he wanted to. He laughed her to scorn, and she to convince him got some services sent to a bazaar, where they sold with ease for more than he got for export ; and now you can buy it in all arty shops for five or six times its proper price. Professor Selwyn Image has often told me how in the early eighteen-nineties he and his friends used to make periodic expeditions to Whitechapel in search of flawed pieces of this ware, which had been rejected by the exporter as not good enough for the negroes, but which artists preferred to anything that could be found in the London shops ; and how the Jew-dealer gradually raised his price for a bowl or plate from one halfpenny to one shilling as he came to expect the return of his artist clients. Now such designs are developed where the craftsman has leisure to be his own designer. Employers who leave no room for such effort in the conditions of work are veritable devils, working to degrade the world for their personal financial advantage. The history of our cottage ware well demonstrates how taste which is acted upon, though in the most unlikely places (an African kraal or a prehistoric cave-dwelling), may benefit the world. You can set no limit to the possible extension of its influence. Our homes have been so invaded by an abject commercialism, which

counts pecuniary profit as the one thing necessary, that the craftsman is to-day always surrounded by hostile and depressing aspects. How can he free himself? I have one suggestion. Let him begin in the corner of one room or garret to order everything according to his taste, to admit nothing into it that does not fascinate his gaze. He can tack or paste brown or white paper over the wall and set an old ginger jar with a branch of spring buds, autumn leaves, or summer flowers, before it, or pin upon it a picture postcard of the work of art that he oftenest longs to see—banishing whatever comes to offend him and replacing it by better. The corner may very well end by comprising his whole home, and making it his in a new sense that corresponds with his advance in life and the pride that begets. The greatest designer of modern times has in that way come to own the most beautiful rooms in London, and the richest in works of art; yet I can remember when he could rarely afford more than one square meal a week, his other repasts consisting chiefly of bread, jam, and tinned meats, though his room was even then beginning to be an astonishment envied by rich men. You will never believe what beautiful things can be had almost for nothing by one who recognizes them wherever and however they turn up. If you need the guide of fashion in collecting you have to pay through the nose, but if your taste is independent it will find plenty of neglected beauties that cost little or nothing; though it will also be free with time and money in order

to increase its vitality. To live is to enjoy ; to enjoy a wide range of admirable objects is to become a finely gifted man, " self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure." Perhaps you think that the truth of the ideas I have set before you requires that each craftsman and artist shall have a superior genius to the one who preceded him. Not at all. It does not even suppose that the work of a man's maturity must either surpass or fall short of that of his youth. Many of us must soon come to the end of our tether, but if we are loyal to taste we shall find ways of making our work different, if not better, and thus keep it alive at its own proper level, instead of yielding as mannerists do to the certain degradation of self-repetition. Style results from harmonizing a man's individual powers of mind and hand with the capacities of the materials and tools he employs, and the latent wealth of his themes. Sometimes the adoption of new tools and materials will give new life and freshness—open a fresh career for a man's powers. Sometimes new themes will do this, or new light on old themes, for art depends on living ; we must think and read, examine the work of new periods, pass through crazes of worship for master after master. If we do not feed our taste by exercising it on the admiration of new things we shall starve and enfeeble it ; and civilization, that hinders the concentration of effort, helps enormously by bringing a great variety of mental and æsthetic food within reach. However, many moderns suffer from a surfeit of

this nourishment, which, hastily and greedily exploited, ends in dulling taste by cloying it. Too fast is as fatal as too slow. Again, the harmony of a man's powers with the capacity of his means may be upset if he pretends that his hand is more dexterous than it is, and tries to make something done slowly look as if it had been dashed off. Again, what madness it is to waste time in making an etching-needle imitate a charcoal stroke ! Anything, in short, which disturbs the relation of the artist to his materials ruins the integrity of his work. You cannot hit two birds with one stone in art. You cannot show off and do your best at the same time. If your eye is single you cannot keep it on both beauty and the main chance. Nor can you go one better than yourself without being in earnest.

These then are the points I have tried to make. Art results when desire and appreciation are brought to a focus. Theory is nothing but a description of past practice, and has no authority over the future. It never comes so near being a law as what are called the laws of science. They also are merely descriptions of what happens when certain conditions are the same. But the fundamental condition of art, the artist, is by his very nature always different. So it is fruitless to speculate what changes are possible. Taste is the only authority. Taste is parallel to conscience ; loyalty to it increases both its correctness and its force. There are no reasons for beauty. Its effect is more abundant life. Tolerate all genuine pleasure as a stage on

the road to perfect appreciations. Individual artists and craftsmen, even when cut off by a niggardly birth-right from an indefinite advance in quality, can keep their work alive, and even, though more slowly, raise its value by applying their skill and power in new ways or in new fields. Finally, it is necessary to be all there. If you half hope to hit something else you will miss the mark.

### III

#### TASTE IN POETRY

When Keats, Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth were all alive and producing, very few people talked about any poetry save Byron's, Campbell's, Tom Moore's, Scott's and Southey's. Yet which set of names kindled the most potent, the most enduring devotions? How helpless we are before this juggling Fame who sets up idols and hides the real god—but not always. Sometimes the right man is acclaimed and popular from the outset, as were Goethe and Racine. That is where the irony lies; if you could count on obscurity or at least a certain degree of shade over a luminary, as marking him out for the future's great light:—but you cannot. The game is hopeless; and though it seduces many people with small literary ambitions, it has nothing to do with taste in poetry.

A shepherd in our most western islands, who knows only a few Gaelic songs and ballads, may have finer taste in poetry than the editor of a popular anthology or a literary magazine. The poetry you can say and hear as it should

be said and heard is all the poetry that truly concerns you ; it is part of your life, and has nothing to do with consenting to a fashion or helping a crowd to shout.

We can all easily read too much verse to really enjoy any. Only the most hearty admiration, the most complete satisfaction, should count. For each of us that alone is poetry which we desire to know by heart, and which forces us to be for ever re-reading it. The remainder verse concerns us not at all, save as containing candidates for admission to this class.

No influence is more shy than that of poetry, more dependent on the time and place ; yet when it finds us collected, alert and yet not busy, no other influence is so creative or so re-creative. Happiness in dancing or listening to music are akin to it, yet less complete, less complex : they lack what a rare conversation may yield, though this lacks what dancing and music had in common with fully enjoyed poetry. The felicity, when we taste it, is of a kind we would no more dream of giving up or being disturbed about, because someone else preferred something else, than we would relinquish our favourite dish, or drink, or game. Yet when, as often, it is difficult to come by, we hunt about and follow other people's taste in hopes of chancing on it.

Be reverent of your taste as it now is, study, praise and protect what you like : but do not rest content with it, be eager to discover new treasure. Discard favourites whose charm departs, keep your poetical life alert and on



the march. Your own taste is vital to you, not mine, nor anyone else's.

Why adopt opinions? Much better adopt an orphan: charity to opinions is misplaced. The value of Taste lies not in having something to say, but in enjoyment. Liking is the whole business, not liking for old sake's sake—stationary liking—but liking ever free to like again, other and better each time. You will then constantly be of one mind with the lover who sang:

'Let the sweet-breathed Violet now  
Unto whom she pleases bow,  
And the fairest Lily spread  
Where she will her golden head;  
I have such a flower to wear  
That for those I do not care.'

This independence is unassailable so long as it corresponds to our real experience; but the moment it ceases to do this, it becomes as regrettable as any other pose.

But some may demur, 'Suppose our taste is poor, are there no means of improving it? Are we to sit down for ever with a music hall song, and never hope to care for Milton, Keats, Rossetti,—or this De la Mare that some people get so wrapped up in that they despise us?'

Of course, if we believe our taste of no account, it will behave as our conscience would under the like treatment. That, as we know, would become dull and languid and tempt us to treat it frankly as a mere hindrance, until our morality vanished. The same with taste; neglect and flout it, and it will soon become

an infection, degrading our neighbours, till we deserve scorn and are really a social plague. If you think of it, Taste must always tell us wrong ; its rightness can only be temporary. Yes, but if exercised, will it not grow ? Obey it, act on it, compare it with that of others, and you will find it expand like a plant--shed old leaves and unfold new likings for hitherto undreamed-of beauties. Taste needs food and exercise and like an infant must not be merely rocked to sleep, or so tightly swaddled that it becomes a mummy.

People ask ' Why is this beautiful ? ' Authorities reply : ' Because all its parts are subordinated according to their degrees of essential truth,' as Coleridge taught : or ' Because it resolves an emotional conflict ' as Mr. Richards now professes at Cambridge : or ' Because it is intuition ' as Signor Croce has thundered from Italy.

But, no, these ingenious dicta answer the wrong question. ' What is true about beauty ? ' was not what we meant to ask, but ' What makes beauty evident ? ' The perception that any one of those answers is true about a given poem, will not enable you to like it. For beauty can alone be seen by admiration. The intellect cannot see it. To know something true about it is not to enjoy it. Not only do these learned men differ quite irreconcilably among themselves, but they seem never to have realized that though you lead a horse to water, you cannot make him drink. The difficulty lies not in recognizing the water, but in lack of taste for it.

So with a poem we see what it is, and believe that many propositions must be true about it. For the eloquent to stretch a point and call water *wine* or even *nectar*, is no help. They cannot make us love it, nor can they change the living water of beauty into the heady wine of knowledge, or into the nectar of celestial kindness, by lying about it.

The true question is 'Can this poem be liked with a finer, a more divinely human admiration than it inspires me with?' And the answer Life usually gives us is : 'Yes, So-and-So has a keener flair, a more refined enjoyment of it than you have : listen to him, keep near him, imitate his delivery of it, and in time you may catch the very thrill of his pleasure without blunting the edge of your appreciation by setting it at naught. It is not his opinion that you should adopt—that cannot yet tally with your experience. He is master of a musical instrument you cannot yet play. Have patience, watch his fingering. You may even need to follow the regimen that regulates his life, all those exercises his soul goes through every day. How useless to adopt his words like a parrot, or to repeat thoughts which travesty your experience !'

The intellect is for ever in a pother pretending to decide questions of taste. Wasted labour ! Things are only beautiful for a woman's reason : because they are beautiful.

Just as science is loyal to knowing, not to the thing known, so we should be loyal to liking, not to the thing liked. Science discovers

what it knew, to have been a mistake; so Taste discovers what it liked, to be no longer likeable. Yet we know what we like now, as we knew what we liked then: so Science knows what is believed to be the nearest approach to Truth, and knew the same when the nearest approach was very different. Absolute Truth and absolute Beauty are unknown. Knowledge and liking are diverse forms of psychic life; they grow by similar processes, but the growth of the one neither is nor implies the growth of the other.

Crowds of anthologies appear, but how stupid they all are! To be representative, the one thing a beautiful selection can never be, is their invariable aim. A bunch of poems, like a posy of flowers, should be put together merely to satisfy the taste of the person who makes it.

To try to be representative, is to attempt to be scientific; for an æsthetic choice can represent nothing but itself. Why should a book of poems resemble a botanical press or entomological cabinet and contain a specimen of every variety? Glancing through yet another anthology I groan and sigh: "When will this aping of science go out of fashion?—Have the courage to stand by your own taste, Mr. Anthologist; only so can you or any of us recognize beauty."

Our own choice must for ever be re-pondered, re-tested, that it may grow finer. If you love poems and if you change your loves as freely and as often as health should, your anthology, the posy you cull for yourself, or

that life culls for you, will become more ravishing every year, until maybe it will take other people's fancy. They might even beg you to publish it before the end of time ;—just because it represented nothing but a well-grown and thriving taste, which no anthology I have ever seen, ever did. One and all they exclude poems their makers liked far better than half of those they included, in order to represent poets ' who ought not to be left out.' As if in weaving a garland it were necessary to put a representative carrot next to a representative rose, or to twist darnel in with honeysuckle.

Take no heed of poets, or specimens, choose the poems you really like best and arrange them in the order that seems to you to suit them best and yours will perhaps be the loveliest anthology that was ever made. Ah, what fragrant thought about poetry such an altogether chosen and wholly admired anthology might set stirring ! If several such could be compared we should begin to feel what taste means—begin to absorb poetry into life, or live in poetry with a freedom very few makers of it have enjoyed. But no ! we all want to ape science or politics, to index representative specimens, or to form cabinets of opinion and exercise power over the elect and their electors, like the snobs. Knowledge ! Ambition ! but never appreciation ? never preference tested by life ? Truth is valuable, but so is beauty. The world and the fashion and those in power are always deluded. An ever-renewed loyalty to experience alone furthers life. Those who

are growing, often speak like this : ' When I was thirteen I simply revelled in Longfellow; but then, you see, I did not know that such lyrics as Shelley's existed.' Thus Taste advances; and should there be nothing to outgrow in an admiration, it will die of sleeping-sickness if it be not revisited, and we shall find mere lifeless words when at last we return. By way of self-dedication to this life-giving loyalty, let us repeat after Laurence Binyon :

' Nothing is enough!<sup>1</sup>  
Though our all be spent—  
Heart's extremest love,  
Spirit's whole intent,  
All that nerve can feel,  
All that brain invent,—  
Still, beyond appeal  
The divine desire  
Things more excellent,  
More costly will require  
Of this mortal stuff  
And not know content :  
Till ourselves be fire  
Nothing is enough ! '

Thus taste and knowledge, like conscience, are best apprehended as forms of life, sharing in life's mysterious continuity of change. The only means by which they can persist, is a perpetual transformation; arrest this and they die. I have elsewhere<sup>2</sup> analysed a few of the many ways in which death overtakes taste, till the generality of our nation live

<sup>1</sup> *The Secret.* Elkin Mathews. 1920.

<sup>2</sup> ' *The Best Poetry.*' *Some Soldier Poets.* Grant Richards.



uncheered by its progress. This evening, if you can accept this notion that taste, like other forms of life, grows to live and lives to grow, perhaps I may go on to suggest that the same is or should be true of each individual poem.

In those ages when poetry was part of the folk-life, no poem can ever have remained unchanged for long; it must have been growing finer, clearer, richer, or else clogging and falling to pieces. For it would shape differently in the more musical memory of some hearer than before it had been delivered to him; or in that of a man less gifted, lose grace and be passed on defective. That fixity and finality of the crystallized form, so much insisted on by some critics, really compares life to dead matter.

Oral poetry must often have originated as prose, or exceedingly rough verse chanted to a lilt. But those who heard it, moved by some suggestion of mood or energy, here improved a rhythm, there a phrase. For as crowds of people write verses nowadays, so, then, hundreds could help a poem into shape: and the best version, so long as the theme quickened many minds, would have a good chance of being most often repeated, without damage and with improvement, until in a few cases perfection was reached—perfection equal to that obtained by the very greatest writers of poetry.

Such a poem is:

'As ye came from the holy land  
Of Walsinghame. . . .'

Shakespeare's Ophelia probably sings a snatch from some earlier version of this poem. One line is identical, and the situation is the same, —though possibly both snatch and poem derive from a common ancestor, and neither be from a direct predecessor of the other. Now Rossetti took that stanza from Ophelia and added four new ones to it to make his *An Old Song Ended*, which is also a dialogue with a lover, only the sex has changed. Nor does the history of this old poem stop even here, for Maeterlinck was so enchanted with Rossetti's poem that he imitated it as closely as he could in French, and made the very best poem in his *Serres Chaudes*. Francis Thompson's *Messages* is a more sophisticated half-metaphysical rehandling of Rossetti's poem, and I myself was guilty of yet another, published in *The Academy* many years ago. These changes rung on an old theme, of which no doubt the earlier unrecorded ones were by far the most numerous, only illustrate the natural, the inevitable life of good poetry in its passage through generations of finely touched minds. Just imagine how many versions must separate the English and Scotch of *Twa Corbies*. The sentiment has entirely diverged, but the situation and the form persist in both.

After or alongside folk-poetry there was often developed a bardic poetry which lived and grew among a professional class of rhapsodists, who made so free with the productions of their predecessors that under Pisistratus popular indignation arrested them, and the

canon of the Iliad was established. Much of the poetry of the Old Testament emerged in a similar way from schools of prophets and colonies of saints such as we catch glimpses of in the historical books. The relation between Akhnaton's *Hymn to the Sun* and the Nineteenth Psalm is no doubt of this kind. An unascertainable amount of textual variation was one of the conditions on which bardic poetry thrived. The mere elaboration of devices to check such change, as among the Welsh bards, proves that it is normal. Tradition never moves for long on the up-grade, and then the very means of development become causes of degradation ; and if the lovers of poetry are organized enough, they arrest decay and in so doing abolish the hope of recovery and of further progress.

When we turn to written poetry, we find it difficult to set any limit to the debt that it owes indirectly and directly too to folk and bardic poetry. Countless passages in Milton and Tennyson shadow strains first heard in Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Italian. The main work of Scott, Morris, Longfellow and many others is a deliberate renovation of old tales, a re-singing of outworn or foreign songs. Even the refurbishing of antiquated or outlandish idioms ravishes the ear in Chatterton, Burns, and Dorset Barnes ; and most ages have had their archaistic poetry as well as their archaistic art—this love of grandfather turns of phrase and time-out-of-mind quaintness is so deeply rooted in the human heart. Yes, genuine poetry regards ancient master-

pieces as a child regards its mother, as something to eat as well as something to love and admire. This is only another result of the same law of poetical life, that growth is effected by fusing new with old. To be wholly and only new is the desire of a fool, whose mental grasp is not sufficient to show him that he is asking for the moon. On the other hand, poetry dies when no new elements accrue to it ; and so does each poem when, far from attracting correction and amendment, it no longer meets and weds with fresh thought and sentiment in those who read it. How can it move them then ? Yet only in them could it have renewed its life.

Commerce has slowly become the dominating force in the mechanism of politics : and the idea of commerce that everything is fated that results in increased wealth, is both immoral and anti-æsthetic. Morality, art, and pure science will more and more recognize in this gross idea the tyrant against which they must fight to live ; for their justification lies in the augmentation of spiritual vitality, not of property. This commercial spirit has gradually scheduled poetry as private property on which the poet and his family ought to live or starve, and has made laws to prevent one poet entering into another's labours in the wholesome way of long ago. To-day Shakespeare would be forbidden to write *Hamlet* or *King Lear*, because he incorporated essentials of an extant play, that is, stole someone else's property. This is absurd. The

notion of substance, of material, has trespassed on the realm of life just as grossly as it did in establishing the slave-trade. A grocer's scales cannot measure beauty. Should verse be done up in parcels stamped with the maker's name? Of old—and rightly—poems were received, used, changed, and passed on to wax or wane in beauty and favour numberless times. And this life-like flow is more akin to their essence, than the notion of rigid legal property in a petrified form. It is indeed only a continuation of what occurred in their author's mind; so the child continues the growth of the embryo. Copyright causes the market to be flooded by masses of raw verse which, far from having passed enriched from soul to soul, have often sojourned in a single brain for no longer than a letter in a pillar-box.<sup>1</sup>

A. E. Housman, one of our most considerable poets and one of the most deeply nourished on ancient masterpieces, because he perceived so clearly this truth, and the ignominy of the modern world which confuses its soul with its belly, always refused to receive a single penny for his *Shropshire Lad*, though he might have made a tidy income out of it. It was published at cost price, sixpence before the war, eighteen pence now, though it is among the best sellers, if not the very best, of modern poetry. True, he is not married and has a sufficient income as professor of Latin; still his is so far as I know an unique nobility. But

<sup>1</sup> For a further development of this idea see 'Hark to These Three.' *Elkin Mathews*, 1915.

I do not wish to bother you with economics, which are beyond my competence and outside my subject.

The ancient poets rehandled not only the poems they originated, but those of their predecessors and fellows ; and all true poets long to do likewise, however cowed they may be by the portents of the financial world. And on the sly you will find them at it to-day ; we have already caught Rossetti, Maeterlinck, and Francis Thompson red-handed, and Mr. Masfield represented Longfellow in his *Sailor's Garland* with the first three stanzas of *My Lost Youth*, which make a far finer poem than the whole ten do.

James Mackereth is a living poet, of whom some of you may have heard, who resembles Longfellow in a genius for verbal music and a tendency to hide his poems in a profusion of unnecessary petticoats. Here is one that has been reduced to the modesty of nature :

#### THE DANCER<sup>1</sup>

' She moves like Silence swathed in light,  
Symbol alive and clear  
Of music that enamours sight  
And yet eludes the ear.

The essence of all rapture clad  
In motion soft as sleep !  
Sheer Innocence would thus be glad  
And very Joy so leap !

The vision she last was, left behind,  
Matched with her now seems nought ;

<sup>1</sup>*In the Wake of Phoenix. Longmans Green, 1912.*



Where whirled of late the embodied Wind  
There tip-toes Lyric Thought.'

Chancing to see a number of *To-day* in which Mr. S. P. B. Mais ran foul of poor Mackereth, I wrote to the editor and sent him this poem, stating how I thought Mr. Mackereth did not do himself justice, but that there was real poetry, sometimes quite exquisite poetry hidden in his work: and I was pleased to receive from the poet a very nice letter of thanks, in spite of the liberties I had taken with his work.

In *Essays by Diverse Hands* for 1924 Sir Henry Newbolt took a poem by Mary Coleridge and three stanzas by John Clare, and ran together certain lines from them both to form a third poem which improves on either.

Now perhaps it more often happens that a poem which delights us halts in some one place, than that it should demand shortening by seven-tenths of its length, or inspire us to add stanzas to it, or to combine it with another by a different author. When a word or phrase nettles your admiration, out with your pencil! delete, correct, replace! You demur: 'The fault may have been in my taste, not in the poem.' True. 'And I may live to see this clearly.' True, again, but for the present your pleasure is increased, and you avoid swallowing phrases and rhythms which you cannot yet digest, merely because they occur in a poem which is otherwise a joy to you. This freedom is as natural and right as that we all take of removing slugs and

caterpillars from the lettuces we eat. Why should we swallow, without examination and in spite of revulsion, food we pay the bookseller for, any more than food the greengrocer sends us? It is we who have to read, not the owner of the copyright, just as much as it is we who eat, not the market gardener. Let us hail the best of fortune, if, when a word or phrase displeases, the mind conceives one happier. Why should you despise the boon, by refraining from action? No other event is more essentially poetic. Nor can a man be more authentically a poet than you have momentarily been. Of course to alter for the sake of altering is damnable! My experience is that one can never alter with durable satisfaction a poem one does not intensely admire. Most of you will have noticed that when you have a poem by heart, if, after rehearsing it from memory for years, you re-read it, you find a version established in your mind presenting a number of variants: and also that while some of these strike you as distinctly inferior, there are others that you are loth to relinquish. Perhaps you may then have wondered how much of this satisfaction in those unconscious changes is due to the familiarity of a bad habit, and how much to a true æsthetic preference. To decide such a point is an excellent exercise of taste.

I was recently rejoiced to come across confirmation as to the vigour of this tendency in one of the most exquisite living lovers of poetry—our French contemporary Paul Valéry—whose incantations touch the acme

of perfection as Pindar's did of old. He writes :

"A poem is valid when it rejects those substitutions for word and phrase that an active, restive reader is always trying to impose on it."

and, has since declared in his 'Discours de réception à l'Académie' :

"Nothing is more new-fangled than this obligation to be entirely original, that some seek to impose on writers. A great and intrepid humility is needed nowadays to confess indebtedness to others for inspiration. You will more easily observe a straining, a too evident will to break fresh ground—how shall I put it . . . the affectation of a virginity that is far from being always delectable. Neither Virgil, nor Racine, nor Shakespeare, nor Pascal were at pains to hide the fact that they had read. . . .

"We reason so frivolously on sublime and difficult themes, that with notable inconsequence we assign the highest dignity to authors whom we dub 'inspired.' We believe them the mere instruments of a breath, a breeze foreign to themselves and well-nigh foreign to Nature; we look on them as talking reeds, and at one and the same time grant them the honour of supreme merit and the immense advantages of irresponsibility.

"On the contrary and in spite of recent superstition, I recognize a particular glory as due to him who selects, who does not affect to ignore the beauties the past has accumulated but, happy in his knowledge of them, draws from

Time's treasury aids to his own perfection. The mystery that shrouds choice is no less than that which shrouds invention, admitting that the one be even distinct from the other. Besides, we know absolutely nothing of the fundamental implications of either."

This mystery which shrouds the birth of poetry he has well sung.

'Honneur des Hommes, Saint Langage,

Discours prophétique et paré,

Belles chaînes en qui s'engage

Le dieu dans la chair égaré.<sup>1</sup>

The divinity astray in the flesh is no man's little monopoly; and only allows itself to be caught in the felicity of words born of an anguish of aspiration, an ecstasy of liberation in the escape of the prisoner back to the non-carnal world, though he must still wear chains. It is, as Monsieur Valéry goes on to assert, 'no longer anybody's voice, so much as it is the voice of waves and of woods.'

Then do not fear to correct Shakespeare or Milton so long as you thus render some passage more ravishing to yourself. The god may be slipping through you into less cumbersome manacles. However, in every case, such alterations must be solely for your actual present enlargement and joy. Their possible adoption by others or the world is a motive which can only corrupt taste, should it cross the mind: far better lay the pencil down and write no more that day.

<sup>1</sup> 'Glory of man, Holy Language, adorned and prophetic discourse, beautiful fetters which the god astray in the flesh slips into.'

Yes, it is not only or chiefly contemporaries that we should thus trim and prune. Doubtless a poem which has been held perfect for hundreds of years may have acquired a patina of association that should render it well-nigh inviolable. But many have remained for as long a period only half-remembered, only reprinted because an author did far better work. A line or two or a phrase may support his reputation, the rest clogs it. Such poems are peculiarly fitted to inspire one who recognizes the true jewel and deploras its misfortune. Among Beaumont and Fletcher's lyrics are many which imprison a divine phrase or a soaring line, but as wholes pass for pretty failures. Here is one from a Masque in honour of the marriage of the Count Palatine with the Princess Elizabeth, by Francis Beaumont.

THE MASQUER'S CALLED AWAY.

Ye should stay longer if we durst :  
Away ! Alas that he that first  
Gave Time wild wings to fly away—  
Hath now no power to make him stay !  
And though these games must needs be  
played,  
I would this pair, when they are laid,  
And not a creature nigh 'em,  
Could catch his scythe as he doth pass,  
And clip his wings, and break his glass,  
And keep him ever by 'em.

The idea is first-rate ; and what a splendid phrase ' Gave Time wild wings to fly ' is ! But the poem is oppressed with the business

of explanation, and, as a whole, resembles a stage direction or an apology. Do not idea and phrase appear to more advantage in this ?

Time, at his kindest, hath wild wings to fly with,

So eyes that dance are after used to cry with.

Would when young lovers meet

And not a creature nigh them

They might trip up Time's feet,

Lay him scytheless on the grass,

Clip his wings and break his glass

And keep him ever by them,—

Making of one brief June night

Ages and æons of delight.

And here is another in which Fletcher may have had a hand.

Come, Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving,

Lock me in delight awhile ;

Let some pleasing dreams beguile

All my fancies ; that from thence

I may feel an influence

All my powers of care bereaving !

Though but a shadow, but a sliding,

Let me know some little joy !

We that suffer long annoy

Are contented with a thought,

Through an idle fancy wrought :

Oh, let my joys have some abiding !

This is a far more successful poem and contains at least one perfect line ' We that suffer long annoy.' But we are not *bereaved* of cares which we would be rid of, and to call a dreamed joy ' a sliding ' is more bold than



felicitous, and the detachment of the last line lets the movement down, etc., etc.

Come, Sleep, be kind now and relieve me !  
Murmur of delight awhile,  
Bid some gracious dream beguile  
All my powers, drive far hence  
Every fretful influence,  
Capture, blindfold, and deceive me !

Like a drug, a distillation,  
Dupe me with a phantom joy !  
We that suffer long annoy,  
Are contented, though 'tis nought,  
With an idle fancy wrought  
To the semblance of elation.

Let me add one last example, since the opportunities I point out not only occur, but seized prove supremely beneficial—a liberal education open to every striver. How indeed are you to know whether or not your own work or other work might be improved, unless you have spent your acme effort on the attempt to improve it? How can you live more fully in an appreciation, or test its value more exactly, than by discovering how hardly any flaw which flecks it may be removed? You thus focus attention on its beauty, and enthrone that above you as arbiter, criterion and encouraging patron of your taste and labour.

The following lines were written by Henry Killigrew.

While Morpheus thus does gently lay  
His powerful charge upon each part

Making thy spirits even obey  
The silver charms of his dull art ;

I, thy Good Angel, from thy side—  
As smoke doth from the altar rise,  
Making no noise as it doth glide—  
Will leave thee in this soft surprise—

And from the clouds will fetch thee down  
A holy vision, to express  
Thy right unto an earthly crown ;  
No power can make this kingdom less.

But gently, gently lest I bring  
A start in sleep by sudden flight,  
Playing aloof, and hovering  
Till I am lost unto the sight.

This is a motion still and soft ;  
So free from noise and cry,  
That Jove himself, who hears a Thought,  
Knows not when we pass by.

In this, I think very beautiful poetry of  
suggestion and phrase is encumbered with  
matter casual to its occurrence in a play.  
Compare it with the following stanzas.

I, thy Good Angel, from thy side  
As smoke from off an altar, rise  
To fetch for thee, my charge and pride,  
Visions that rove through Paradise.

Those fair ethereal ramblers own  
Hearts ever ready to be kind ;

When thy fatigue to them is known,  
They'll flow with me like posied wind.

But gently, gently, lest we cause  
Start to thy sleep by sudden flight,  
We'll play aloof, hover and pause  
Till they may steal within thy sight.

Theirs is a motion still and soft,  
So free from noise and cry  
That Gabriël, who hears a thought,  
Knows not when we pass by !

And now let me close by wishing everyone this happiness, to become an angel of resurrection to some poem. Indeed everyone who really makes a poem a part of his or her life, is this, whether words are altered in the process or not. But those who find a poem lying like a swallow with a broken wing on the threshold of Fame, and humour the fragile little bones into setting, and fend for it till the lofty air can lure it to felicity, will add the joy of a Good Samaritan to that of a lover of poetry in whom poems live and re-live. And, in doing this, you do no more than was always, naturally and rightly done before hard-handed Commerce trespassed within the precincts of the Muse's shrine :—From which may the villain be ousted, if not in our time, yet in a near and better age !

## IN CONCLUSION

I

My first chapter gave reasons for thinking that beauty is undefinable, objective, and a quality of sensuous organic wholes; also that we must discover it by admiration, without which no vital contact with beauty can be ours. The next showed how the complete æsthetic experience englobes the beautiful appearance of the external object in an atmosphere of association, thoughts and moods, and should thus effect a second beautiful structure quite distinct from, though including, that of the work of art. The next two chapters severally ran over the kind of differences caused to our apprehension of the relations between creator and masterpiece, and critic and the work he judges, by these conceptions. In the last but one, the psychic regimen hidden in our use of the word *Taste* is disentangled, and shown to be parallel to the experimental method as used in science. Indeed both are parallels to the working of conscience as understood by those who have been most happily devoted to the creation of the best possible temper for life. In the chapter preceding this, the reader has perused some examples of the exercise of taste advocated, and been asked to glance down a few of the vistas which it opens into new possibilities for the æsthetic life. Now it only remains to sum up, so as still further to insist on unremitting creativeness as the likeliest method of progression, since loyalty to the present can alone accord loyalty to past and future.

Though it is now, I hope, obvious in what various and insidious ways I conceive that proximity to the immense success of science has influenced artists and æsthetes to their hurt, it may not be useless to run over the chief of them.

The collector and in consequence the dealer like to assume that a proof of an etching, taken while it was still unfinished, is more valuable than one recording the master's final intentions, whether he admire it more or not, because it is unique, rarer than the more numerous ones of the finished state; and his taste sooner or later warps to his passion for collecting. The art historian who is busy classifying works of art, seeks for any trait by which one master's work may be distinguished from others, even though it be a fault, a mannerism; and naturally he tends to think of this peculiarity as not only establishing the genuineness of a work but also its value; and the dealers and most collectors are delighted to accept his results, for they tend to steady the market, and to certify the nature of the objects dealt in. There are to-day a great number of intelligent people who feel that in order to conform to the complete human ideal, it behoves them to add art to their other interests. Unfortunately their æsthetic preferences are neither strong nor clear, having been confused, bullied or neglected in early youth. Their intelligence, which is hale and hearty, wishes to make up for this unfortunate lacuna; and so they too welcome any definite clearly understandable reason for preferring

one thing to another. Again, the young artist is dismayed to find himself but one of a small crowd of aspirants to fame, all nearly as clever as himself ; and is tempted to welcome a theory conceived either by himself or another, which bids fair to distinguish his work,—and thus destroys his only chance of real originality, since henceforth he will be guided by something else instead of by his actual æsthetic preferences. The journalist, consumed with hunger for fresh copy, finds that definite and various reasons feed him much better than mere—and in the main inexplicable—preferences ; so he helps the young artist air his theory and tries to fan it into a craze ; he also repeats the expert's exposition of the nature of the distinctive trait or quality. The chatterbox, who mistakes the superiority of his or her conditions for distinction of character, is driven by fatuity to re-enact in talk the treacheries into which the journalist is goaded by the struggle for a livelihood. So all these various classes of person go gaily along together by the primrose path that leads if not to an eternal bonfire, to the frustration and confusion of taste. Taken together, what a majority of the art-world they compose ! Nevertheless it must not be presumed that any of them are merely or wholly false to taste ; genuine liking mingles with their judgments in countless various proportions. Yet all of them are naturally and inevitably, by their mere situations, subject to the influence of some intelligible, pseudo-scientific substitute for



taste. They suffer pressure, which tends increasingly to exchange the true concept of the work of art as an admired organic whole for some single distinctive character as the stamp and seal of its value.

But there is a more general aspect of these tendencies. It would probably prove possible, though it has not yet been consciously attempted, to classify all works of art according to the degrees of their distinctiveness, without considering their æsthetic value at all, merely by examining them as the entomologist sorts insects. Well and good, and wholly to be desired, with this proviso: that the classification is clearly understood to have no more to do with their æsthetic values, than that of the insects has.

Now besides distinctiveness, there are several other single qualities put forward as the unique sign of æsthetic value. These also push towards a scientific criterion for art, though more incoherently. When I was at the school of art I was for ever arguing with those who were convinced that realism gave this value: realism being for them an effort to tell with paint or modelling-clay or words the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the appearances of objects. Rather later I came to argue with those for whom impressionism occupied this sovran seat. The impressionist was supposed to tell you or put into a picture, exactly so much of the appearance of scene or object as had at first impressed him and made him desire to paint it. To this he must never add qualities

which he later on came to perceive. Afterthoughts were secretly inimical to true art, and had led the poor realist into the wilderness from which impressionism, like Joshua, was saving a chosen remnant. Abject loyalty to a single moment of his past experience was what the impressionist expected to save him. Never could he be loyal enough! He never was loyal enough.

Thereafter my opponents became those who raised utility to the pontifical chair. Why are such millions of pictures painted that nobody wants? Art is not the cause of this waste. Why is every utensil you pick up defaced with meaningless ornament? Art abhors such garrulous imbecility which can leave nothing alone. Everything made with hands should serve a purpose, and the best material in view of that purpose should be used, and its design be dictated by the tools employed, so that the workmanship may be a joy to the producer, and his pride ever after. Objects so produced are beautiful and no others can be. So arrogantly were design and beauty ousted by the children and grandchildren of Morris.

Next I spent hours listening to a gifted friend who wished to persuade me that art must no longer deal in the commonplaces of representation: abstractions like solidity, direction, force, immovability, etc., etc., should be severely expressed by an uncompromising technique. Artists should read Euclid and purge their hearts of self-flattering admiration for human softness and inefficiency. If they

must amuse themselves with representational forms, let these be so hideous that the average man should feel them like a blow, and stagger. Lust is real, love a sentimentality, ugliness and ferocity reveal power, beauty and grace are narcotics to produce self-eluding dreams. This devil's advocate possessed both genius and humour.

Still more recently an enthusiast, as human and gentle as the other had been perverse and violent, assured me that art was the communication of intimate associations. He had wedded impressionism to conception. The artist's spontaneous conception conveys his associations like a spell; he must resist all temptation to improve on it or otherwise alter, for, held steadily in mind, it would inspire a living technique. No matter if in painting the drawing were lost, so long as every touch was instinct with the same lively purpose with which the picture was first conceived. He also enjoyed genius and delighted in oddity.

Now all these antagonists of my thought were illustrating what they said by what they did. As I listened to them I recognized that I also had been in some degree shadowed by the same mistakes; and it was myself that I freed from the clinging net, as I argued and failed to cut them free. At the same time they made me aware of beauties I had hitherto neglected, for which I felt much gratitude. In the end I could but feel I understood them far better than they understood themselves. All of them were

æsthetic puritans saving themselves by the one-thing-necessary, and scorning and setting aside as naught far greater gifts and characters than their own. If appreciation consists in the recognition of some one character or experience, it is an affair of knowledge, it is science; its merit is to inform us of the presence of that one describable quality.

Even among those whose taste moves freely and has not been drilled into a goose step by some drastic theory, many yield to the temptation of assuming that their own taste is very nearly perfect, and hence despise that of others. This is one of those stationary attitudes that we are learning to suspect and supersede. The division between genuine and simulated taste is far more radical than that between any two admirations. But even this division deceives, for the aspiration of growth is sometimes almost indistinguishable from hypocrisy, and the young often foresee that they will admire before they actually do. A sound judgment must always take account of the place any given manifestation holds in a sequence. If taste is refining, it must necessarily traverse many comparatively crude stages; but its arrival and resting at those very points, once it is deteriorating, has of course an altogether different value.

Only after such judgments have long become habitual for psychologists, and after the collection of the requisite statistics concerning the growth of taste has been facilitated by some profound transformation of society, will it be possible to trace foundations for a science of æsthetics.

Dogmatic judgments are always of the stationary class. I read the other day that the most popular stanzas in Shelley's 'Skylark' were bad poetry, apparently because they were popular. The chief beauty of this masterpiece obviously is that of the whole. Which stanzas could be called the most popular? Some days later I lighted in a school-book on a possible explanation. As such books go it was exceptionally excellent, yet it declared that the stanzas 'Like a poet hidden,' 'Like a high-born maiden,' 'Like a glow-worm golden,' *do not make the bird more but less real to us.* What a notion to instil into the mind of a child! Shelley's avowed purpose was just *that*! 'Bird thou never wert' he warns such fools at starting. It is the audible, invisible, 'unbodied joy' that he is making more real. How is it possible to suppose one can read poetry and miss so obvious an intention? Shelley is still for many teachers 'a poet hidden in the light of thought.'<sup>1</sup> Such judgments and such criterions are hopeless, they ape science so shoddily. The most infantile taste should move beyond them as soon as they are formulated, or before. Any mistake in praising may help us mount, though one which we prone and teach begins to numb and stiffen our limbs so that they cannot leave it behind. Fault-finding lames taste, whereas admiration gives it wings. To have loved many things may even be to understand that none of those things were wrongly loved, though most of them can no longer engross our affection.

<sup>1</sup> See *Appendix H.*, p. 206.

## II

Modern taste has frequently applauded those who specialize in unique qualities, the rarity of which becomes their value on the market and even in the mind. Specialization has been imposed perforce on science as a super-human comprehension became requisite. Many take for granted this is equally needed in the arts. M. Valéry regards it as the distinctive trait of our period, and founds much of his practice on it.

But if beauty name a vitality discovered by admiration in complex wholes alone, specialization must tend to restrict opportunity. If art aim at constructing a delicate organism, then to drill ours to impart a single definable character, is to starve on foregone conclusions.

We hear artists praised for having uncultivated minds, or some one excellence which excludes every other graphic quality. We see literary reputation founded on the drift or headlong rush of a temperament in a single direction. Hyper-æsthesia has discovered rare qualities, can it ever properly relate them to those already prized? To fuse the new with the old requires an all-round gift such as we admire in Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare. The Greeks and the Renaissance recognized balance and human poise as supreme, and Giotto is pre-eminent for this among the masters of primitive painting.

Mankind may be regarded as a century aloe, a still more illustrious agave, with a yet longer periodicity. Its blossoming



must be legendary for such short lives as ours. Has it ever yet flowered? In Greece? In Italy? In Japan? In China? India? Egypt?

The answer is always more than doubtful. Such rumours may have arisen from the flowering of merely millennial, allied species. Yes, many a less towering, less gigantic stem of bloom has produced countless seeds which have taken centuries before they in their turn overwhelmed some far region in beauty and perfume; for the true, the supreme amaryllidacea, Humanity itself, is even yet not ready. The whole world must contribute before that can bloom.

Our prospects are now intercontinental, but so are our difficulties. Can we entertain comprehensive ideas, or must we return to hole-in-the-corner-it, even if ever so selectly, as before? An æsthetic theory, to yield true service, must arrange all the facts, and can never dictate results unless it substitute something else for liking.

### III

What should the practical result of my having persuaded my reader be? I venture to hope it will enhance personal experience, as related to what may be gathered about the experience of others, and inspire a progressive contentment with life. At the same time it will shift the focus of attention from the static position of actual likings, to the line of their development. Violent changes of opinion will no longer allure, but appear as risky operations

that can only be justified when, to recover some deformed or diseased growth, the knife must be resorted to.

These persuaded readers' relations to other people's preferences will grow wholly social and kindly. Interest will focus on discovery of what a taste less matured than their own will next admire, and to introduce it to the destined treasure will be success: while in regard to those whose taste has obviously passed beyond their own, they will be eager to enquire by what steps it advanced, in hopes of lighting on beauties which their own taste is on the eve of discovering, and at last ripe to embrace. The æsthetic life will become as real and absorbing as that of enquiry or that of affection, and all three will proceed abreast into an ever richer future. They will recognize that views known to be partially false may be more beneficial in some cases than others known to be partially just, because none can be absolutely true, admirable or right. So they will extend wise and wary indulgence to the for them obsolete admirations and behaviour of others.

However indigestible any particular admirations divined as mine may have seemed to such readers, they will allow that these are due to misfortunes that have doubtless warped and vitiated the growth of my taste, and will welcome the truth of those facts, which, though so handicapped, I have endeavoured to illumine and illustrate.

Mankind as well as individuals has always perforce accepted its actual perception as to

what things seemed true, beautiful, or good, and, by acting on, tested it ; and then discovering wherein it was faulty, repeated the process with the amended perception. No, this is rather what men should do, than what they have actually done ; for life in this world tempts us constantly to defer or neglect or belie this loyal course and choose more devious ways.

A declaration and a profession transfer us from the realm of æsthetics to that of politics. Though the early Christians had been warned ' By their fruits ye shall know them,' they none the less demanded a declaration, a profession ; and so filled history with grotesque caricatures of their Master. Indeed theirs was ' a fate as common as unkind.' They were so superior to the world about them, that a little presumption in regard to those things which had saved them, and helped them daily, seemed inevitable. Perhaps it was. But need it still be ?

So the mistake that our modern æsthetes are now making was blundered into by the saintly and virtuous, who crystallized immature dogmas and creeds.

Though no doubt I myself have often been guilty of it, let me illustrate the untowardness of this presumption of superiority from one of our most distinguished polemicists, Bertrand Russell. Eager and proud of advance in social virtue, pacifists, communists and educational reformers are peculiarly liable to succumb to this frustrating scorn for opponents, which is of course as blindly

returned. We all know that in a general sense nearly every honest teacher loves children, every true Christian must be a Communist at heart, and every gentleman a pacifist. Dispute arises not about aims, but about means—not over ultimate achievements far ahead, but over pace and opportuneness; it is in fact political. Yet this powerful and entertaining writer, with whose main theme I am in agreement, delivers himself to this tune;

“Those who regard it as one of the purposes of male education to produce men willing to kill and to be killed for frivolous reasons are clearly deficient in diffused parental feeling; yet they control education in all civilized countries except Denmark and China.”

Yet, evil being still unexplained, is it not impossible to picture the evolution of mankind, without supposing that to desire readiness to kill and be killed, has been a necessary stage in it? Neither the pacifist nor the militarist conviction precludes respect for truth. Men who entertain either may be equally ready to welcome light shed by experience. Has not the taunt of this writer in the bad sense a militarist spirit? Is not his a really frivolous reason for a contempt such as has often led to otherwise avoidable wars? Men have not only had to struggle against natural hostilities, cold and heat, storm and earthquake; but diverse yet contemporary stages of their development have produced inevitable misunderstandings, irreconcilable interests and tempers, one of the least manageable of which is the pacifist's. If wars have been necessary,

it cannot be denied that such necessity may recur, though we may hope at longer and longer intervals, with an ever-increasing crop of pacifist martyrs. Futile and frivolous though many wars may have been, or may still be, some must almost certainly have been justified in truth and by goodness.

One more instance.

"To win the genuine affection of children is a joy as great as any that life has to offer. Our grandfathers did not know this joy and therefore did not know that they were missing it. They taught children that it was their duty to love their parents, and proceeded to make this duty almost impossible of performance."

Obviously parental and filial love and joy had flourished and been frequent many centuries before this writer was born. Obviously they have always depended and still depend more on the spirit in which parents apply their ideas than on the correctness of those ideas. Though we gladly welcome the correction of ideas by scientific study, we should also be just to our predecessors who, in spite of real handicaps, may have won and given more joy than we can pretend to.

A free and benign imagination should not offend by employing the vulgar and patent injustice that political opponents hurl at one another.

In a similar spirit we have often been told that art must not point a moral; yet great artists, Sophocles, Dante and Milton, often didactically pointed morals. Obviously there

is no necessary antagonism between beauty and goodness. In art, beauty must not be sacrificed either to truth or to goodness; by virtue goodness cannot be subordinated either to beauty or fact. Each should respect the independence of the other, wherever they are not already at one, since their complete fusion with experience is only speculated about, not yet known. In the same way, those who in matters of taste wish some intellectual theory to bear sway, disparage æsthetic liking in the name of truth, and maim taste in seeking to correct it. Apt taste depends on a perfectly resilient response, every degree of stiffness is betrayed by some loss of relevance. In this sphere 'Judge not that ye be not judged' is absolutely cogent. We must never condemn on the ground of general conclusions, for these are necessarily hypothetical. The whole dispute over Ingres and Delacroix about the classic and romantic is of this nature: neither of these tendencies either insures or precludes beauty, any more than the tenets of pacifism necessarily produce a better temper than those of militarism. The same with impressionism and realism, and with post-impressionism and old-master picture-making. In all such cases to be aggressive in either camp is merely to nourish a prejudice that will prevent our recognition of some beauties, and result in the deliberate self-starvation of an insufficiently vital soul. Hence if we wish to develop our taste, we must painstakingly free it from the domination of fashion and politics.



Have not the French, who in so many ways are our superiors, perhaps misled us? They use the same word for 'sensuous' and 'sensual' and but one for 'conscience' and 'consciousness.' Hence it is easier for them, even than for us, to fall into at least two fatal errors. Let us not admire them less, but more warily.

#### IV

Practical dangers occasionally arise from this growth of taste; some minor risk is always present. The story of the Widow of Ephesus will serve as illustration. She spent night and day weeping on her husband's tomb: yet within the week yielded, first to the kindly, and next to the amorous advances of a sentinel stationed near. Animal nature proved so much stronger than high-flown sentiments. Common sense concludes that, had her grief been less extreme, she might, in a reasonable time, have made a second marriage, and have lost less, nay even gained. Whereas, since the story became known, she would seem at the very least to have lost her reputation, and probably the best opportunities that life still offered to boot. For young widows have frequently passed from a cold to a warm bed without loss of self-esteem or that of the world,—nay, with gain on both counts. They teach us to be devout a-tiptoe. Loyalty to what we have loved and prized is good; but new claims arrive; if we remain unalterable, we shall neglect these. The considerateness,

grace and gentleness of our temper while effecting the transference of our devotion, is all-important—amounts to the whole difference between success and failure.

Indeed for deep-seated and resplendent loyalties, the past will not prey on, but vivify the present, discovering forms that refuse to petrify and evolve unforeseeably. Thus Catherine of Siena caught in her two hands the head of Nicola Tuldo as it sprang from the execution block, to save it from rolling on the dirty ground; while, there and then, in a vision 'as clear as daylight,' she watched his soul rise and receive welcome on the bosom of the Son of God.

By the very means of an exceeding piety for his dead body, her love for Nicola was transmuted from physical tendance and anxious solicitude for his soul, to an exultation over fate. Affection free from every trace of fear, can only be compared to immaculate taste, a phoenix indeed! Even those who judge such visions to be sheer illusion must admit that this one was strangely well-timed and uncommonly reviving to the life concerned. To cling to dead preferences endangers the virtue of our relation to beauty.

'I am as true as truth's simplicity,  
And simpler than the infancy of truth.'

Such protestations are wasted words, when the idol of the young raver's adoration sees no vast difference between him and any other flourishing male, but is something bored by his earnestness. Pathetic asseverations delude the voucher and rivet his blindness to his

mistake. Struck, an attitude soon caricatures itself; it should be discerned as it passes, intent on things to come. Once let her settle, lo! Psyche's wings are black! Their azure sides folded together hide heaven between them. Nor will they spread save in prospect of quitting us. Be ready to follow!—How? On foot?—If felicity cannot float you, plod you must. For the future must always drag us up by the roots from our past unless we come away of our own accord. What we were, we cannot remain, since here and now laggards find,

Virtue takes her leave as fee,  
Truth may seem, but cannot be,  
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she.

## APPENDIX A (page 5)

### *On the Nature of Value*

*It is pretended that psychology can furnish a theory of value, i.e. that what happens values itself. We read: "The debauchee and the victim of conscience alike have achieved organizations whose price in sacrifice is excessive. . . . Upon grounds of prudence alone they have been injudicious, and they may be condemned without any appeal to peculiarly 'ethical' standards. The muddle in which they are forced to live is itself sufficient ground for reprobation."* This writer obviously judges muddle to be bad and order good, and is judged himself to be muddled. How can a price paid be excessive, unless there is a standard value? This is the same confusion which those whose business it is to estimate truth, so easily and frequently fall into. It is well illustrated and defined by Dr. Taylor in 'Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge,' pp. 467 to 476. I may quote part of his argument. "In any reasoned forecast of the probable future of life on our planet, we must, I presume, expect that the types which will be able to persist longest will be some of those which long ago succeeded in adapting themselves to the kind of environment likely to remain longest unchanged. . . . But we should not on that account say that a deep-sea organism ranks higher in the scale of being than man." Though upon grounds of prudence one might. But Dr. Taylor continues: "The most enthusiastic evolutionary biologist does not really base his estimate of the worth of a type on consideration of its chances of survival. . . . Wherever he

got his standard of worth, at least he did not get it from his evolutionary researches, he brought it to them. . . . You neither explain what a thing is by saying how it has come to be there, nor explain how it has come to be there by saying what it is. . . . Value is independent of origin."

A parity of reasons applies to would-be psychological critics of art and literature: they simply do not understand what they say. They imagine that they do not refer to an ethical standard unless they use the word good or give it a capital—that they have no 'truck' with beauty if they avoid mention of it.

#### APPENDIX B (page 27)

##### *On the Meaning 'Good'*

Perhaps I should here briefly state what I conceive 'good' means. This value is as often confused with Truth as Beauty is. Indefinable, I conceive it always implies that which will belong to or be part of the best result. The best result will have as well the value truth, because it will veritably be the best. But of course its possibility, its existence and its nature are unknown. Then good, as we use it, always implies belief that the thing so named deserves that name. That which serves a definite known end is only good as a means to that end and need not be supposed any part of the ultimate best, and therefore not be good in itself.

The mistake of supposing that the finally best result can be deduced logically and foreseen, or need exist elsewhere, was made both in India

and Greece, perhaps also in China ; and leads necessarily to a negation, from which all things actually believed to be good are excluded, which is self-contradiction.

Men cannot live without inferring this value. Those who profess to do without it always in practice suppose that one thing will produce a better result than another, or else they destroy themselves either rapidly or more at leisure according to the violence of their faith in bad logic. (See Appendix A.)

If we suppose evil to be an essential character of at least part of reality, we cannot suppose that the three values can for any being fuse into one. Some things will be true which are neither good nor beautiful, and these values will therefore be more valuable than truth.

If we suppose evil to be an illusion, then as long as we perceive evil we cannot be conscious of the whole truth ; and the same in regard to goodness and beauty, if the relations of an object or person with all other things form part of a valuable whole which also contains that person or thing.

In the first case we must hope that evil can be separated from goodness and beauty. Therefore Milton's 'Elder Brother' says :

' But evil on itself shall back recoil  
And mix no more with goodness, when at last  
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,  
It shall be, in eternal restless change,  
Self-fed and self-consumed.'

In the second case it is our own nature which calls for change, and we shall do well not to resist evil in the world, and to practise virtue



and art not primarily for the sake of mankind, but for our own sakes, in order to grow out of this evil delusion : though like the Bodhisattvas we may conclude that this cannot be perfectly achieved so long as it means consenting to the damnation of any of our fellows.

The modern intellect seems to prefer this second alternative, though without grasping its implications. Milton's 'Elder Brother' was content that there should be unforgiven deeds and a hell and souls in it.

Any conclusion in regard to these speculations is perhaps premature. Speculative philosophies, like religious prophecies, may have value as beautiful imaginations and might perhaps achieve æsthetic form. Their truth cannot be known, and their practical effects must necessarily remain ambiguous, for many a long age to come.

#### APPENDIX C (page 28)

##### *On the Word 'Expression'*

Professor S. Alexander in an admirable essay on 'Art and Material' conceives the æsthetic process with far greater clarity than Croce. Yet by clinging to certain misleading words, of which 'expression' is the chief, he falls short of his mark.

I will quote a few phrases, unlucky, though not so unfortunate as most art-critics indulge in. "Without the intention to use words for an artistic purpose the images will not flow." As if the intention sufficed ! As if they never did flow without the intention !

"The impulsion in natural beauty comes from the beautiful thing itself." Does it ask to be admired? Does it nudge the elbow and paw the clothes of the indifferent, like a desperate prostitute that will be seen and perforce desired? "Shakespeare, who was a reed through which every wind from nature or human affairs blew music." The impulsion from without again! Tennyson used the same image in disparagement of Swinburne, 'a pipe through which anything could be blown to music.' Mind and body compose no Æolian harp. It is a human will that chooses and plucks the strings, not a random gust through a back door.

"The work of art, being expression contemplated for its own sake." Expression of what? of whom?

"Bodily life . . . is fit . . . to express and knit together the dominant passion inspired and excited by the subject-matter." This dominance of creative passion one would think, on the contrary, more fit to knit together bodily life and drill and train it to create a satisfactory object, and often to insist on its treating the subject-matter with great disrespect, at the dictate of limitations set by the material used, freely distorting or caricaturing the theme, motive or subject-matter;—as when it makes a bottle in the shape of a man with legs atrophied beyond the possibilities of nature.

"The artist amplifies his expression until his passion is satisfied by the external expression." Quite as often he cuts it down and whittles it away till he can hardly recognize it in the object which he can at last approve.

*"And never lifted up a single stone."*

*"The line does not merely describe the old man's grief: the grief is, for the æsthetic appreciation, actually in the words." Whose grief? the old man's? Wordsworth's? But they have long been dead. The reader's? The prose causes mine, not the verse! Surely it is the relation of the verse to those that came before, of the failure ascribed to the described character, that is powerful. Not the music of the words, but these things, help us to grieve with the old man, to rejoice that we have grieved, and above all to contemplate his grief as an organic part of a beautiful whole; and thus for aptness alone a line in itself merely inoffensive becomes beautiful.*

*But in spite of errant phrases, it is the best essay I have read. Professor Alexander began by asking: "When Shakespeare makes Othello say 'Wash me in steep down gulfs of liquid fire,' had he that very image in his mind? or did his excitement overflow into these words in the same way as the excitement of anger overflows into a blow?" Is a blow a pot that anything should overflow into it? or are words drains? We suppose that many things were then present to Shakespeare's mind, but how his mind influenced his body or that his mind, has not been discovered, has never been plausibly conceived even. The place and manner of their meeting are unknown. When he clutched at, chose or found those words, we suppose that many things were before his mind: Othello and the scene, the previous lines, and in perspective the whole play, and probably many other less relevant thoughts*

teasing to be considered like a swarm of gnats. He had watched Othello's excitement rising, sympathized with his blindness and rashness : but was he excited ? If he was, the cause and nature of his excitement surely differed utterly from Othello's : he is far indeed from being carried away by the Moor's frenzy. Imagining the scene and finding words for it exhilarated him, he perceived the line as tremendously apt — apt as music, as thought, as a convincing index to what was passing within Othello. The moment the words occurred to him he responded to them far more perfectly than we do. They might well make him rub his hands, or even dance, only he probably could not spare the time to indulge himself just then.

Poetry-writing and carving statues are not parallels to perceiving trees, as the Professor supposes, but to weaving boughs together or digging a ditch. Mind is always in touch with action, which could not be human if it were not. Yet mind never 'coalesces or fuses with material,' but is always as distinct from its share in the result as the hands are from theirs. Passion is energy born of extreme need. The artist's need is to approve and admire the work of his hands, not because they have made it, but because the result is admirable like a flower or a cloud. He expresses nothing for the sake of expressing that thing — that is what a scientist does, — but in hopes of approving the whole to which he contributes the expression of the thing. Realism, impressionism, romanticism, classicism, cubism, gaga-ism are only a few among the colours on his palette ; he uses them in what proportions please his taste.

*And now for the outside impulsion. The incoming train does not physically force a little boy to scurry back across the platform. His emotions insist on his running. An image of the Express has rushed into his mind, and deprives him of self-control where he might have stood his ground. No doubt he experiences that physical commotion before he thinks of himself as frightened, just as he must experience it before he could master it and prove himself a man next time. At a less human stage of development the reaction might have thrown the child down before the train. He was already man enough to resist the suicidal promptings of terror which deliver the bird to the snake. Next week he will not even run away. This choice among reactions is of the very essence of æsthetic life. Shakespeare rejects more mechanical, inhuman, and pedantic reactions than most poets. His imagination provided the Express, his art was a freedom resulting from self-control. Because he had mastered them so deliberately he understood all the various strata of less human reactions.*

*The work of art is always a result quite distinct from its origin, and you can never safely deduce what a poet felt from what he wrote. 'Expression of' is absolutely a blind alley, whether it means of a state of mind, of an emotion or of a theme. The poet merely perceives that the thing said dovetails with the other parts of his poem, both with those adjacent and those remote. If it does this perfectly he does not care how vaguely it evoke the emotion, or how incomplete it be as a description of the object. A musician does*



*not strike every note equally loud, but gives each due sonority among others ; some are almost inaudible, others rattle the windows. Thus must every creator of a thing of beauty behave.*

## *APPENDIX D (page 29)*

### *On Idealism*

*The things we think about are of two kinds, perceptions and conceptions. I perceive a window and the view through it, I conceive that two and two make four, or that the world was in essentials the same before I was born. Conceptions apparently arrive in the mind very much later than perceptions, and may be plausibly considered as deduced from familiarity with them. The baby begins with perceptions, and most of these are the appearances of material objects, though not realized for such, which would be to conceive their implications. Though the baby may experience discomfort and pain as soon, these may be regarded as the internal appearances of its bodily state. Our awareness of our being is of precisely the same nature as our awareness of other appearances. If there is nothing behind these latter, as the idealist supposes, why should there be anything behind the former ? There is as good reason for the one supposition as the other. Why put conceptions like mind, identity, personality, soul or spirit behind awareness of being, and refuse to put matter, events, space and time or a space-time continuum behind awareness of appearances ? The two implications are completely on a par, one has no more evidence than the other. Both are equally known*



and unknown. They are known to exist, that is we feel forced to suppose something there. The mere awareness does not seem to be the whole truth about either. We do not know what our consciousness implies, but we believe that this something exists; we do not know what our perceptions imply, but we believe that that exists. Veiled by appearance and hidden by ignorance applies both to being and the universe. You may make nonsense of existence by doubting whether there is anything behind—whether both be not illusions. And of course if you act on your doubt and refuse to put food in at your mouth, both illusions, it seems likely, will in time vanish. You have no more reason for supposing that one will then continue than that the other will. To say that we ourselves and the universe only exist in thought or in mind, is surely like saying that land and sea, houses and roads, only exist in description. Description is essentially conceived as of something, not as existing for its own sake; so thought is about reality, and is more or less truly related to it. Mere thought is nothing; both fictions and lies must have some verisimilitude, i.e. likeness or supposed likeness to what exists apart from thought.

#### APPENDIX E (page 50)

##### *On Allusion in Poetry*

Language interprets exceptional experiences by allusion to common ones, so that an allusive element is part and parcel of it. Topical reference to things that will never belong to general

knowledge only momentarily inverts this order, and, though a staple of speech, debases literature. For this reason satires and comic poetry tend to become moribund sooner than other forms. Their temptation to dwell on the actual as distinct from the universal elements of life is obviously very great. No doubt ephemeral circumstances are as necessary for comedy and tragedy; but, in them, their relation to universal interests is always subordinate. The whole force of the word vulgarity perhaps decries exaltation of the temporary and trifling. Closed societies and cliques exhibit this herd-instinct on a smaller scale, but with a life-likeness which would shock them did they realize the resemblance.

Allusions not generally recognizable may sometimes add to the æsthetic experience when we penetrate them; but a poem is no organic whole if it appears defective before they are understood.

I might present you with a piece of paper pricked through another on which an Euclidean diagram had been drawn, the pin having traversed both sheets at every junction, and say, "Now find out how the lines ran from point to point." The intellect would alone be addressed, the æsthetic faculty would be crossed and thwarted by such an irrelevant task. It is proof of the present disproportionate predominance of intellectual interest, that missing-word puzzles tend to appear in the form of poems, and amuse the select in the same sort that the vulgar are amused. Curiosity as to what has been left unsaid is like the more common excitement as to what comes next, a scientific not an æsthetic exercise. No

doubt the utility of its satisfaction in training the mind could be easily over-estimated. Certain ancient works require a knowledge of the background of current ideas against which they were produced, before we can gauge their historical importance. But the beauty of masterpieces is independent of such knowledge: in them a reference to Pandora or Proserpina will tell you as much about those ladies as at the moment it is necessary to know. Often the only misunderstanding has been the supposition instilled into the humble soul by schoolmaster or snob that more knowledge was required. As a matter of fact, ignorance often reanimates the masterpiece far better than scholarship. Most readers ignore half the allusions in *Lycidas*. To read an annotated edition may then well resemble watching the bloom brushed off a bunch of grapes by clumsy handling. The poet had opened a window. To have your head thrust through it in order that you may see more than he intended to show, may upset the balance of his effects: that surplus must fall asleep in you, before the full resilience of appreciation can be recovered.

Of course ancient dramas were intended to be completed by the spectacle, the whole effect was not in the words. Even for Shakespeare, they are a mere skeleton without either flesh or cloth, a music without vision, a score without the sounding orchestra, at most hardly more than half the work of art: so that, in reading these, imagination must create or re-create references for many allusions.

## APPENDIX F (page 31)

### *On the Paramountcy of Surface in Graphic Art*

The lively harmonies produced by counter-balancing illusion, which ignores the surface, and diverse methods of reasserting its presence, are fatally forgotten in much criticism. The surface being the essential fact of graphic art, all other elements must respect its existence. There is no such art where nothing is added to it and where it is entirely effaced and the eye deceived so as to believe it absent. Between these extremes a successful balance may occur almost anywhere. One of the chief functions of the frame is to emphasize the fact of the surface. In such decorations as the dome at Parma or even in the Sistine Chapel there is a fusion of the aims of a scene-painter with those of a picture-maker. Michael Angelo painted cracks across this ceiling to force the architect to strengthen the roof, and thus, perhaps, at the same time, instinctively recognized that the surface stood in need of emphasis. Indeed real cracks, within reason, add, I think, to the beauty of large frescoes. Literature usually describes pictures as though the illusion were the whole of their beauty, but the by-talk of good painters tends to focus on the treatment of surface. In Eastern painting the materials used made a high degree of illusion impracticable, though it was sought within narrower limits. Ignorance also protected Eastern masters from the dangers arising from knowledge of perspective and anatomy. Yet though such science increases the perils of design, who could deny that it has increased the range

of success? The perspective of Piero della Francesca, the anatomy of Michael Angelo, are instinct with imagination and divine with graphic felicity.

#### APPENDIX G (page 52)

##### *On Language as an Emotional Stimulant*

We have been confidently assured that language was at first solely used to stimulate emotion. However, naming and other distinguishing processes would seem necessarily to have preceded any possible use of words to stir emotion. No doubt animals use sounds to rouse emotion but not words, and even civilized man falls back on animal noises under strong emotions. The true aim of art is asserted to be the communication of states of mind. A writer who mocks at Croce tells us, at unnecessary length, that the picture is not the pigment any more than a poem is the printed signs, but a state of mind present first in the artist, then more or less closely reproduced in the spectator. So I suppose a rose is a communication of the state of mind of a bush. But a picture is an arrangement of pigment in various shapes and of various colours on a surface, in order to make that surface beautiful: and a poem is an arrangement of sounds and meanings.

Truth has not two distinct meanings, the first used when statements tally with fact or experience, the second when statements are acceptable — agreeable to the organism as play is; this second meaning being obviously only a different application of the first to need and capacity instead of



to fact and experience. To run and leap and shout are actions true to human capacity ; so a funny story is true to the expectation of our needs when it makes us laugh. There has been an exact fitting of words to a forecast event. Also when truth equals sincerity, behaviour or language are asserted to tally with intention or thought and not to disguise them. One of the prevalent bad habits of psychologists is to improvise definitions and a terminology for meanings which could be far more clearly expressed without either, by anyone who was at the pains to discover, by learning to write, the resources of language.

Tragedy is always passing from statements which tally with probability to statements that tally with that latent capacity for definiteness, power and eloquence in reaction, which we all feel the need of but usually fail to achieve. These second statements free the fettered psyche imprisoned within us, the first prevent her freedom running lengths which experience teaches us are incredible. Tragedy is too flattering to the unrealized man when the characters, good or bad, are equal to every occasion in deed and word. When merely realistic, it fails by not delineating that inner world of desired power and eloquence, which we feel sure was present though it was never sensuously apparent. Both the ideal and the realistic treatment fail to evoke a complete experience. For our sympathies to receive its full import, we must be as conscious of those latent capacities as of their probable frustrations. The balance must be kept, and of course this balance must be at poise with many others to produce a masterpiece.



APPENDIX H (see page 180)

*On the insufficiency of Learning without Liking*  
Since this passage was in print, I was amazed to find Mr. T. S. Eliot making a similar mistake about Shelley's *Skylark*. He asks, "Why dawn?" as he has just referred to the pale purple even," though the poet has before that referred to the golden after-glow, and broad daylight, and the blue deep of noon, recalling occasions on which he has listened to the invisible chorister. He also stated he did not know 'what Sphere' was intended. Hereupon A. E. H., in the 'Times Lit. Sup.,' Dec. 20, 1928, and Mr. A. Y. Campbell, in the 'New Statesman' for Jan. 5, 1929, asserted what nobody can know that stanza v refers to the planet Venus, not to the moon as is commonly supposed. Both are spheres and when in decrescence the moon approaches the rising sun it becomes more and more visibly solid and not a disc such as it usually appears when opposite the sun and low on the horizon. The corresponding phase of its crescence 'the new moon with the old moon in her lap' may indicate that for most eyes it then appears in the round. Sphere is much less sensuously apt if applied to a mere dot or star as Venus is for all but a few rare eyes. The bold 'narrows' is for the same reason much less felicitously used of this planet. For the moon not only is shorn of radiance but narrows to a sickle as the dawn veils its less luminous portions. Of course her 'lamp' is not necessarily located east; the effect is sufficient anywhere, save too near the western horizon to allow of its fulfilment before she has

sunk. Mr. A. Y. Campbell insists that the comma at the end of the stanza rules the moon out, but, though 'keen' certainly qualifies 'delight,' it does not follow that the image for delight's radiancy, 'the arrows' must proceed from the image for the unbodied joy, the 'unseen' star, which would produce a contradiction between visual images. Most poetically conclusive, however, is the loss of the contrast between the moon vanishing within the dawn's brightness and hidden by a lonely cloud yet overflowing the whole sky with light, and the weakening of the emotional progression from stanza to stanza: iv compares the invisible songster to a star lost in daylight, v corrects, the song's importance is rather that of the moon before her disappearance into the growing day; but this seems to forbode the imminent loss of the music, therefore vi re-assures us by finding the picture of the moon fully effective yet hidden as the bird is. Silver is pre-eminently the epithet for the moon. No one can vouch for what was actually in Shelley's mind. His language might apply either to Venus or the moon; but, read as of this latter, is richer in suggestion and gives the stanzas a more poetical progression. Therefore it has almost universally been so read. Learning cannot resolve such a doubt, whereas liking can and must decide.

## EPILOGUE

Flesh shrinks from steel, and the naked goddess gladly uncases her limbs; it was only in order to free our mechanism- and logic-fettered spirits, that she buckled armour on preparatory to bursting the lonely dungeon, dark without one star, into which the exclusive intellect had cast us.











